

**a dump a day**

**(365 screen dumps)**

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*screen dump : moving data from a computer screen to a  
printer or storage medium*

*for you and you and of course ... for you ...*

1

Your follow-up was detrimental to strung-out marionettes  
and you were ticketed for low-tech gaudiness ...  
Please remain online for the entire coupling ...  
You will know the ending before ...  
of course without interpretation but then this is not  
something new ...  
I know what you're pinging ...  
You wanted to use collapsible grammar  
but you sleepwalk ...  
I too would have walked  
especially with those whatever they're called ...  
I've heard you were nailed by your therapist for pithy  
disclosures and for not being experimental enough ...  
Not to worry ...  
The binary code as cracked by binary poets  
isn't all its cracked up to be ...  
So now you're trafficking in what? ...  
Several have said that you were lavishly costumed  
and that your characterization was stop-motion  
and that your *ars poetica* was off the charts ...  
Third-way scribblers have a way of rewriting  
the world as we don't know it ...  
Tick-tock tick-tock ...

2

Your institution green eyes reflect the Bela Lugosi  
of your dreams with the flagrancy of youth  
though you continue to take pot shots  
at clay academicians and lesser-known wannabes ...  
There's something sad about that  
and something to be said about that  
but I'm not sure what ...  
Walmart is as good a place as any to start ...  
Never trust alabaster cockatoos  
or blue-light specials or, for that matter, people  
named Iridescent, or Iri, for short ...  
I did ... several times ...

Trying to make the most of it...  
But I thought I was invited for that reason...  
So I dove in... over my head...  
A roomful of talent minus one...  
The made-for-TV villain was the voice  
of pastiche... dancing his/her amendments...  
I've been mining prose for revelations  
since day one... engulfed in pretension...  
picking and choosing from both sides of the menu...  
What matters... *is*... what matters...  
Be well, do good work, and give it a rest...

3

Winked into dissolution...  
As if it would all come together...  
As if it held the key...  
As if it could dance with a throat-singer...  
But it didn't...  
So I reread the end of *The Hours*  
from *Yes, Clarissa thinks, it's time*  
and re-played *Liberal Arts*  
and used *artisanal* in a sentence  
conning myself into thinking  
*I have more important things to do...*  
Does hunkering-down really work?...  
Especially now with its hint of snow?...  
Someone asked *Why so serious?*...  
I wikipedia'd... and thought twice  
and tap-danced... then resumed...  
Why play dumb?...  
Is this a risky read... a *PG-13*?...  
Brouhahas are like that... insinuating themselves  
into the lives of others...  
Insinuating themselves into your life...  
When you least expect it... or need it...  
Despite the admonitions penciled in the margin...  
Despite the warnings on the label...  
*Do not try this at home...*  
We've all tried it at home... How else



are we able to put our foot in our mouth?...  
One foot in front of the other...  
Shuffling the minuscule deck  
as if with gloved hands...

4

The closed-circuit TVs of the '50s spoke nonsense...  
There were handprints on the windows  
and names missing from the guest list...  
Moments were filled with traffic lights  
and three-ring binders and *The Late Show*...  
You left with a ne'er-do-well  
whose hands reminded you of your father's  
and drew upon your inner beauty  
to wade through loneliness...  
Of course you remember the maitre d'...  
The entourage of hangers-on...  
Everything was written down... everything...  
You tried to reshoot the scene  
but they mumbled their lines... and couldn't be heard  
above the clues to today's *Minute Mystery*...

5

Parrots parrot my thoughts... ruffle their feathers...  
ask if I've paid my dues...  
I knew I should have passed... I need to cut back...  
Is there a better word for *indifference*?...  
It just seems to go on and on...  
Well, at least there's time left on the meter...  
Freud's *Pleasure Principle* is anything but...  
Over the top? ... I try to immerse myself in chores...  
To your gloved hand... fondly...  
Is counter-transference an option?...  
OK, so I wanted to read about your cutting-edge  
indiscretions...  
Do you have a problem with that?...  
Why should he/she have all the fun?...

6

Something about the accumulation of exchanges ...  
The *stifling* accumulation of exchanges ...  
Trying to rekindle exchanges ...but why? ...  
Trigger points for *happy sad good bad love hate* ...  
I follow the dotted lines ...get quizzical looks ...  
I've gotten them before ...boxfuls ...  
No rhyme or reason? ... No expectations? ...  
Look where we are now, Ms. No Expectations! ...  
Anything you say can and will be used against you ...  
Retractions make for exciting bedfellows ...  
Read through the entire script then decide ...  
We both know snow is on the way ...

7

Too many (themes?) withheld ...or forgotten ...  
Like you wanted the password ...  
In good company ... Isn't that how it goes? ...  
Withheld before taxes ...  
Walking out because you know the unknown ...  
And the attendant trials and trails ...  
*Happy trails to you ... until we meet again ...*  
It makes me want to laugh ... or cry ...  
Toggling your image ... in a snowstorm ...  
Toggling your image ... in a snowglobe ...  
Are you ready for the season opener? ...  
Switchbacks are fun ... sometimes ...  
Toggling through switchbacks ...  
Especially now with your credentials ...  
The opening scene was obscene ... My popcorn popped ...  
It's good to be asked to leave ... *Dear Diary* ...  
The first time I scrolled through the profiles  
I skipped yours ... despite its seductiveness ...  
its general good nature ...  
Seems as if we could revisit it ... Reshoot it ...  
Would that sit well with you? ...  
Would it make a difference? ...

*I have to see a thing a thousand times before I see it once.*

- Thomas Wolfe, *You Can't Go Home Again*

Before you know it you'll be re-rutted  
and misusing *comprise* in a sentence ...  
Why bother hitching a ride back home? ...  
You can't go home again ... not again ...  
This time take it one day at a time ...  
I was flabbergasted by the number of choices  
in the condiment aisle ...  
I had to re-set my counter ...  
There are days when it all seems backwards  
or at least ... nevermind ...  
Regardless, ride it out ...

What is there to say about a life of images? ...  
Carting around images ...  
Cropped images ...  
Fair images ...  
You know ... *accurate* representations ...  
The graininess ... the stolen glances ...  
the exists ... the *en-trances* ...  
Coming off looking lily-white  
especially with the sound of the wind ...  
But what of the great love stories  
of the past ... present ... future? ...  
Much of their greatness derived from strictures? ...  
Works of fiction, yes? ...

You step out of Dr. Galigari's cabinet  
and into the transcendentalism of Silicon Valley ...  
Why the copy of Stuart Brand's *Access To Tools*? ...  
Beef cattle punctuate the landscape ...

Items bought online perfunctorily...  
The stars and stripes...  
Inbred across workbenches...  
All recorded on acetate... now *The Cloud*...  
You remember the midnight ride of Paul Revere...  
The mental gymnastics of Steye Wozniak...  
The two Steyes...  
Did you think it would all crumble?...  
Along with Shelley's *Ozymandias*?...  
Two roads *still* diverge in a yellow wood  
despite Joyce Carol Oates...  
*Yes, go on...*  
Christmas morning... and *You Are There*...  
With Walter Cronkite?...  
He too was known to occasionally come undone  
off camera... Not unlike dear Mister Rogers...  
*It's a beautiful day... in the neighborhood...*  
Backstage Jim Henson spirited away  
by Christian Scientists...  
*Is That All There Is?...*  
*Eartha Kitt?...*  
*No, Peggy Lee... Eartha Kitt is*  
*All I Want Is All There Is and Then Some...*  
Oh... Wait, I've got only one bar here...  
Advance the tape, please... aha, enter stage left,  
Beckett's wearish old man, Krapp...  
Ha ha ha!... Excremental tweets!...  
*I lay down across her*  
*We lay there without moving*  
*But under us all moved, and moved us*  
*Claire's Knee, Knife in the Water, L'Ayyventura...*  
Get back on track...  
You still owe me a paper on Giacomo Leopardi...  
I'll take the *incomplete* to go...

But then the question of promiscuity...  
Costumed for easy access...

That drum majorette is out of line...  
Unwind on cue, yes?...  
Reviewing dailies, again?...  
Assuming the position...  
I'm cognizant of the repercussions...  
Trying to think positively here...  
I can't help it...  
This time...or the last...  
Which is it, maestro?...  
There was just too much riding on it...  
That should do it...for today...  
Tomorrow, we'll take a look at alternatives...

12

*We always reveal the truth about ourselves despite ourselves.*

- Elizabeth Bishop

Earwormed... *Every 1's A Winner...*  
*Frances Ha*, yes?...  
Boredom's deliberate silence taxidermied...  
And so we have Emily's *It remained / with me...*  
Crossing state lines in *waybackmachine.org...*  
Long hairs running clichés...  
Stone(d) cold dead...  
Once upon a time in classical music...  
But the hunger remains...and is *HUGE!*...  
The contrast cranked up...  
*Sans* clues... Quickly, the remote...  
Buzzword Soup?...  
Another radical bibliophile set adrift...  
On Black Saturday...  
*OK, I'll pinch that*, she said  
and proceeded to disrobe  
in full view...of no one...

13

You rehearse the lines of a jilted acupuncturist...

Stunning, quotidian, rare lines ...  
As they should be, yes? ...  
Adjusting the papier-mâché halo ...  
I too can be three ...  
Without which we will soon be lost  
in seasonal motifs ...  
Press *Restart*... NOW! ... for the Gipper ...  
The daily application of palindromes  
seems to be working ...  
Que the chorus ... send in the clowns ...  
Wait, she *doth* protest a tad much ...  
You alone will see the different colors  
as they come and go ... come and go ...

14

At breakfast, the usual ordinariness ...  
Several chiming in ...  
The transmigration of voices saturating all ...  
Her willingness? ... A ploy? ...  
Pawn to queen's knight four ...  
Interrupted in the middle of the sleepwalk ...  
*He's liyid!* ...  
We can remedy that with a backrub ...  
And you're worrying the lost luggage? ...  
And the bags ... under your eyes? ...  
*I love it! I love it!* ...  
Very professional looking in the gray business suit ...  
And yet? ... *I'm still on antibiotics!* ...  
Our lives as refunds ... as car rentals ...  
Of course, you can spin it a number of ways ...  
And convince yourself? ...  
Perhaps satisfy your inner orphan? ...

15

I will try to rewrite that but no guarantees ...  
You seem to have seen past the obvious ...  
So this is where you want to biyouac? ...  
Higher powers ... by all means ...

The shape changes from *Into Great Silence*...  
Walking out after almost two decades...  
*Sans* synchronization...  
With drop-dead costumes...  
Following you...trance-like...  
Carrying on with make-believers...  
What happens after a few drinks?...  
The Styrofoam takeaway boxes  
at your beck-and-call...  
Every new day is A-O-K...  
Whatever it takes to make it work...  
Becoming unhinged...  
swinging back and forth...back and forth...  
Free to be A to Z...

16

Dusting oneself off (*so to speak, of course*)...  
Dylanspeak!...  
*I'm sailing away my own true love*...  
Once upon a dream sequence... Why is that?...  
Failure recapitulates failure, yes?...  
The inaccuracy of memory vis-a-vis  
the inadequacy of documentation...  
Really?...  
They keep trying to reach you with old questions...  
Old questions...  
The comfort of old questions...  
Boarding the balloon with old questions...  
The upheavals in every last one of them...  
Some sidelined...  
Some stopped short in the breakdown lane...  
It was one of those moments...

17

And now... a break in the action...  
Choreographed as mirror-image  
against Cat Stevens's *Peace Train*...  
And you return to your former self

backing in through the door  
Having been pent-up in the Green Room  
rehearsing the lines of a 12th century master  
of calligraphy...  
Some weird magical osmosis...

18

The eternal sunshine of book samples from Amazon...  
And the pleasures of con-ca-te-na-tion...  
Enter therapist - a Jungian archetype with snow-capped  
Montblanc...  
Emailing corrections... *Gate not Kate*...  
Foundering or floundering?...  
Laying or lying?...  
There are *only* semantic differences...  
Collecting dust  
and examples of misanthropes  
and photos by FRAN-GES-CA (Woodman)  
who tweaked the world, and helped us see...  
cu @ 10... in racing snowshoes...  
If nothing... invigorating...  
Busily recruiting attention...  
As if the key were outside the glass...  
Outside the (*Silent Snow, Secret Snow*) globe...  
A Glass cover by Nico Muhly...  
And you will have time left on the meter...  
if that matters...

19

Stabilized by the red wand...  
the red *magic* wand...  
*Silencio!*...  
And the floating trumpet in *Mulholland Drive*...  
*What floating trumpet?*...  
Beats per second (she counted)... beats per second...  
Your footnote going on and on...  
*Everybody's gotta learn sometime*...



What can you say when you're put on hold? ...  
Rethinking the configuration  
the operating system  
the avenue of days  
the apparent movement of texts  
below the surface ...  
After the fact, yes? ...  
Grabbed by the realization that we all hide behind  
something ...  
Buying what we sell ...  
Who lives in the makeshift dwellings  
of your dreams? ...  
The makeshift dwellings of your past tense? ...  
A rudimentary offer ...  
and you're out the door ...  
*Out! ... Out! ... Out! ...*  
She prefers being confused to patronized ...  
The red lipstick of herself ...  
Awakened in the middle of the night ... again ...  
Of course, you could always ditch the gamer ...  
cash out ... whenever ...

20

The preponderance of memory ... saddlebagged ...  
Aspirations aside ...  
The scene with Jane at the crossroads ...  
*Smile though your heart ...*  
Weighing heavily ...  
*Why Charlie Chaplin? ...*  
He wrote the music, yes? ...  
The scorekeepers have left the building ...  
Fast forward, please ... to the ending ...  
Telling yourself these are words ... only words ...

21

The disingenuousness of last minute players  
and late starters ... and those on the cusp ...  
Return receipt requested ...

Parlaying the obvious...because...justbecause...  
Looking back to go forward...  
Like Casals at 96, *I'm making progress...*  
Awakened by recalls...and the nudge of those...  
With the chorus...announcing the place...  
(as Oliver)...*of your one wild and precious life...*

22

In a gray boat on the high seas...  
Cutting corners...  
And you thought the interim sideman  
would fill the bill?...  
He can't even hit a high G...  
What...now you're reconsidering your offer?...  
A no-holds-barred relationship?...  
Why not?...  
Playing the field subliminally...  
Too much riding on it?...  
Not unlike the trust of a junkyard dog...  
Drop back, regroup, and buy the season ticket...  
Full-throttle engagement...  
What better way to say what you want to say?...  
Of course you have!...  
You wrote the book...and the study guide...  
The scene closes with Biff reading the email...

23

Letting your hair down as an antidote for befuddlement...  
Or trying to write a memoir...  
Or booking a junket to Legoland...  
Like using stagehands...as stand-ins...  
Giving head to a cavalcade of pranksters  
in a box of Wheaties...  
Then feeling overwhelmed by neologisms...  
At the slightest provocation  
divulging past transgressions to Facebook friends  
then wiping the slate clean and raising your hand...

24

Living on the edge in a snow castle fiercely ...  
As if intuiting the sun ...  
Why didn't I think of that? ...  
Multiple geographies can distract, yes? ...  
By the time you have to be here ... costumed ...  
and inclined ... reclined? ...  
A glimpse ... just beyond the threshold ...  
You have followed the southernmost tip of masquerades  
in thigh-high boots ...

25

The intentionality of the dropped hint ...  
The open-ended proposition ...  
Note-taking with the idea of pasting paragraphs  
as windows ... to the unconscious? ...  
The inked benefactors lining up ...  
You will be among them, yes? ...  
Their voices ... as loud as the automatic writers  
whose manipulated images captured your fancy  
and changed the rules ...

26

Parading around your interiority ... as a luxe mannequin  
costumed for auditions ...  
improvising lines ...  
upending the unsuspecting ...  
Your alphabet ... a perfect storm ...  
Can you imagine the interminable wait? ...  
Counting the top-heavyies, of course ...  
(Wouldn't want to leave them out, now would we?) ...  
Journaling their embellishments under  
the customized dialogue of your irreverence ...  
Pity the sitter is busy ...  
You'll be pinned into the Hall of Fame  
and returned ... unopened ...

27

*One of Proust's most exciting qualities is the way he demonstrates how circumstances of one's life which seem casual and ephemeral can solidify for the rest of one's life.*

- John Ashbery

Like squeezing tubes of paint onto a palette ...  
The brush loaded with the hidden rooms you slept in  
when you thought no one was watching ...  
Looping *Last Call* ... with Rod Serling's *Twilight Zone* ...  
An experiment in retrospective nightmares ...  
Falling short in word count ...  
Your long legs ... inked with regret ...

28

But what if it doesn't resonate with you? ...  
Shredding documents at a record pace? ...  
The Art of Throwing in the Towel ...  
Too soon? ...  
Being shortlisted ... in bed-hopping  
and other meritbadge arraignments ...  
And what of the times you were understudied  
or overstudied  
or ignored as a hidden passage? ...  
You were ID'd in the slide show  
and at the cinema  
despite the mapping of your face  
and a lapse of ethos ...  
A herculean accomplishment  
is a hair's breadth away ...  
Out of the blocks ... was always your forte ...  
But can you outrun ... your past? ...

29

The archetypal penitent arrives ... in his/her  
buttonedownness ...

Running numbers ... and memorabilia ...  
First and ten ... and we're back  
in the back seat again ...  
The higgledy-piggledy-ness of it all  
brimming with eye-squints and back-arches  
and a hidden cache of squandered moments ...  
Find meaning in the process, yes? ...  
Cut the deck and deal ...  
and charge a pretty penny before you awaken ...  
You are selling you ... for a trip to wherever ...

30

Beneath the bespectacled and beruffled  
schoolmarmishness ... a mermaid ... wearing a tuxedo  
as a condiment  
gives head to the next runner-up ...  
Rainy day people touting extra virgin oil  
caught unawares ... then slow dancing ... *slow* dancing ...  
A rhythm ... notwithstanding lyrics ...  
Floating heads talking ... talking ...  
wondering ... if you're hot ...  
Is it the insecurity of changing *could* to *can* ...  
while bequeathing instructions to the polloi? ...  
But I want lyrics! ...  
And you shall have them ... in due course ...  
Their folly ... your volley ...  
How else to explain the transformation ...  
into a best-seller? ...  
Speeding along ... synchronistically ...  
Bravo! ... A notch on the bedpost ...  
for comic relief ... How do you spell relief? ...

31

Mild spoilers ... and the immensity of the default ...  
Players entering on cue ... off-cue ...  
The out-of-the-box forks in the road ... several roads  
diverging into the improvisations of a roomful of extras  
rehearsing lines with the seductiveness

of a silent film star...  
And I'm still behind in my payments...

32

Costumed and ready... for your entrance...  
Past odysseys closeted  
you wander the produce section  
at the supermarket... gesticulating  
with the engaging intensity of a Steve Jobs...  
iPhones tweeting your moves...  
Is it really all in the (Tarot) cards?...  
Or in the vast emptiness  
of intimate conversations  
where off-hours you sub as a seamstress  
and single mom...  
letters of the alphabet your back-up...  
ignoring the line of interviewers at the back door?...  
Desperately seeking Tolstoy...  
in Heri's *How Should a Person Be?*...  
You recall doing Tarot cards at a reading...  
Words... upon words... upon words...  
merging... colliding... falling to the floor...  
swept up by Goethe's *Apprentice*  
outsourced as a mouse...  
A cloud rising above the single-digit listeners  
before exiting through the open mic...

33

Trying to piece together *A Day in the Life*...  
Impossible... without the missing pieces...  
Next time I will use raised beds and crystal tumblers...  
Archiving words in formaldehyde  
with night caps for all!...  
The only way to experience the ups and downs  
of an innocent...  
Sharing a jar with the winning pencil pushers...  
dotting the dot-coms

with a new sincerity [citation required] ... Voila, and the  
illusionist of your dreams penetrates you ...

34

Bystanders offer discounts ... yet your clairvoyance ...  
Strike chords ...  
energizing ghosts of past intentions ...  
Prancing as if ...  
You've been told it's in the posthumous disclosures ...  
the half-full glasses ... the buy-backs ...  
reeking with the formulaic dissonance  
of dime-store alchemy ...  
Do not again retreat  
to your cubicle of indifference ...  
This year with its rotated crops ...  
its penny-wise detractors ...  
its non-hallucinogenic markers ...  
This year will be YouTubed ... aplenty ...

35

Calculating the geometry of emptiness  
as poster child ... for necktied boardwalkers ...  
gridlock etching your profile ...  
your opening (lines) whetting the appetite  
of earmarked loners eager to test their insanity  
against the diagnosis du jour ...  
A pantomime ...  
Another's tarnished voice ...  
A sepia'd dreamscape ...  
Your cork-lined shadow ...  
The joker in a one-act ringing up the list prices  
of the books in your understudy's oversized pockets ...

36

You as transfixed interloper retrofitted with Mary Janes  
and muffler ...  
Unabashedly underwhelmed ... as if in the first chapter

of a rewrite...(understandably?) wary...  
Thanks for coming in...  
There are fortunes to be made  
in espresso (or so I've heard)...  
Can this bunch of words pass for a poem?...  
Regardless, they want to sit together  
and exchange email addresses...  
I'm listening... are you?...  
The somnambulist from your past... stalks you  
through the streets of your adopted city  
along the canals of your waking life...  
Is it too late to draw straws?... order takeout?...  
but is that what you *really* want?...  
There's a pantoum in the neighborhood  
with your name on it...

37

The fetishization of eccentrics... a favorite linguistic  
preoccupation...  
Your lengthy footnotes filled with distractions...  
Your costumed oscillations... exciting... innovative...  
Jot this down...  
*Intellectual subtlety not intellectual snobbery...*  
The portal through which you passed...  
What better cinema than the conjugation of opposites?...  
man vis-a-vis woman...  
Energetically engaged... full of themselves...  
Encased within the artifice of the image...  
the image itself... flashing art and life...  
irony and sincerity... coexisting?...  
Care to believe it?... It's not *like* it is; it *is*...

38

And now... the makeover... rescripted from  
the backs of cereal boxes committed to memory...  
the back seat loaded with energy prompts...  
Logging early-morning miles...



New and improved hairstyle ... eyeglasses ... footwear ...  
The snowbanks ... friendly reminders  
of the constant gardener lost in the shuffle ...  
waving bye bye to the big wigs ... drawing  
a business card from the middle of the deck ...  
There once was a crooked smile ...

39

*Is it the act or the agreement?*

- Anon

Living life as if in the third draft of a novella ...  
trying to be the person you appear to be  
as in *I appear to be a grocery shopper* ...  
Addressing the cast and crew ...  
Contemplating the final scene ... and credits ...  
Enough to graduate? ...  
Answering the door ...  
*(Please repeat the question)* ...  
Answering the door with blueberry muffin on your face ...  
Seemingly insignificant, yes? ...  
Pockets bulging with bucket lists ...  
Convincing yourself happiness is \_\_\_\_ ...

40

You return through comatose streets  
to your former life  
delivering soliloquies to dust motes ...  
dissecting local littlenesses ...  
*Are you there ... in the folds of flesh?* ...  
Your willingness to please ... a conundrum ...  
winning gold stars ...  
featuring in little black books ...  
Why now the eagerness to turn the page  
to erase the whiteboard  
to leave nothing for them to mull over? ...

Professors emeriti take incidentals  
 to the landfill  
 after an afternoon of splitting hairs or wood...  
 Grows in fanfare mode...bid adieu...  
 You as ventriloquist dummy lip-syncing what he/she says...  
 Ice beginning to collect under the audience's  
 fingertips...  
 In awe of the flotsam and jetsam...  
 driving a steamroller through an early morning blizzard...  
 the granularity reminiscent of a mid-July beach...  
 The perimeter secured... as ghosts from your old  
 neighborhood dance around a bonfire  
 before burning state's evidence...  
 And you thought yesterday had passed?...

*It's in my hands... It's in my hands... Uh huh...*  
 Fan-boy/-man n+1 gifted with mixtape...  
 word-of-mouth(ed) into a cauldron  
 of Beanie Babies  
 and goldfish in plastic baggies  
 to yamp the definite article...  
 explore the body's color-coded architecture...  
 crotchless sighs decrescendoing  
 then picking up a pizza  
 and assuming the position of hometown player...  
 picture-perfect wife... and kiddos...  
 The coffee break(s)... an obliqueness enters the room...  
 You lie there... studying the revolutions  
 of the ceiling fan...  
*I aced today's pop quiz!...*  
 while they trustingly thrust away  
 with the variable tempo... of such moments...  
 never to pick out china patterns...  
 never to time out with five minutes remaining  
 on the clock...  
 Neither this... nor that... sufficient... to ring up

asale and tie a bow around the latest installment...

43

You speak out of habit...blah blah blah...  
of the shuffling of odes...  
the regurgitation of arias...  
querying passersby for the elements of style...  
But what of the landscapes?...  
The costumed fantasies of the metro?...  
Have you lost interest?...  
The robins...confused...peck at flakes...  
Screens emblazoned with *Life's Good*...  
If for no other reason...  
Wrong station...wrong time...wrong person...  
Buying into the quintessential mismatch...  
Crossing the bouleyard...  
Styrofoamed takeout for another all-nighter...  
Am I misrepresenting you?...

44

Night...again...images dance on the walls...  
leave messages...  
try to complete the jigsaw puzzle...  
edging leftover pieces off the table...  
How deep to drill down?...for the pause  
that once refreshed?...  
This hiding within costumes...  
within clauses...  
Have you learned your lines?...  
Segue to the interview...of you...by you...  
Worrying the safety of asbestos gloves?...  
Making a fool of yourself...again?...  
Relying on chance discoveries...  
chance meetings?...  
Teeming with comebacks...however tardy?...  
Is it *tardy*...or *tawdry*?...  
This may have worked

but now the wax has cooled...  
You've been around the block, yes?...  
Why now lose the *many-splendored thing*...

45

Oh, so now it's a collaboration?...  
Yes, with large and small moments  
of confrontation...  
Inevitable... speaking to (a) void?...  
But can you respect silence  
and the thrashing of time... and ideas?...  
I think so...  
What do you mean?...  
Give me a moment, will you?...  
Now, again, tell me about the journey  
without the social work paradigm crap...

46

Why pump brown-baggers with your sing-song  
voiceovers?...  
Off-camera, they tally returnables  
as if they were concubines...  
The harem of Suleiman the Magnificent?...  
Of course... confiscating the identity-thefts  
of rumor-mongers  
where caged birds sing off-color  
beaming like Mona Lisa... or Mona Simpson...  
You have escaped into the alphabet  
of your new life...  
former lovers... patchworked...  
not to be purged... or upstaged...  
Bots scan your groceries... and your trash...  
Fear not!... Despite the rigmarole  
of spinning the classics...  
They go where they want to go...  
Don't play dumb...  
You know the password is case-sensitive...  
Costumed for the kayak season...

life jacket unzipped and open...

47

Riding the omnibus...seats filled with misgivings  
and loud tourists...  
Voice recognition software set to repeat...  
*butbut happy happy endings endings are are*  
*possible possible...*  
Switch to neighborhood pick-up artist...  
Apply ground to canvas!...  
Squeeze color onto palette!...  
Emails edge into the rangefinder...  
Opening lines tease...cutZZZs...  
*How now brown cow?...*  
There's still time to fail, you know...  
Still time for a lukewarm run...through...  
Still time...  
The Second Unit Director's comic book appeal heating up...  
skittering across the plasma...  
and into the next phase of your intrepid indelible life...

48

Your OGD has empty pockets and a magical frotoir  
mixing love songs with waltzing submarines...  
fickle pickles...and all that(straightahead) jazz...  
Your iPod...as well...  
has a way of thumbing its nose at linearity...  
segueing...when you least expect it...  
It could be your imagination...or wainscoting...  
but the instruction manual was pretty clear  
and, besides, your new body image has shipped...  
You have turned the corner...and the key to a turnkey  
system...Don't turn back now...  
Syslogs with moments of passion are yours...

49

A big-ass flatscreen TV flashes images

of your sexual odyssey ...  
Your French-braid's breathy narration has won  
Best Supporting Actress ... etch-a-sketching  
a passing fancy in your spare change ...  
Not that you don't have it ...  
Your close angularities I've admitted ...  
from afar ...  
Texts bouncing like crazy! ...  
A small-scale simulacrum ... a hidden cafe ...  
and you ... costumed ... with baguette and vino ...

50

Riffing on the ramifications of red ...  
The color charts sashaying ...  
Brushes loaded ... for happenstance ...  
And you ... positioning yourself  
for the next *Game of Queens* ...  
I see what you mean by *ramifications* ...  
It does kick up the stakes  
with a surprise to boot ...  
But is it the red? ... or the thought of red? ...  
or the thought of you ... in red? ...  
You are now auditioning prisoners  
for your next episode of *Mission Impossible* ...  
I'm trying to turn the page ...  
as you instructed ...  
But there aren't enough words left ...  
And now there's a stalled vehicle  
in the middle of this line ...  
Your move? ... And the promise of pleasure? ...  
Is there a way around? ...

51

Pocketing the change assailed by screen shots ...  
Googlemapping an escape route ... backburnered ...  
Let us now praise (in)famous men  
with tape measure ... of course! ...  
Diagramming sentences ... guilty of youth ...

From the lineup, please ...  
Overhead baggage overflowing ...  
But you knew that, yes? ...  
So, why now ... mid-stream? ...  
Always ... and then some ... The die was paired  
for craps ... have you forgotten? ...

52

The incidentals ... morph into deal-breakers  
filled with luscious dreams of hapless heroes  
barreling down fire escapes ...  
lobbing putdowns from the three-point line ...  
Not sure what I was thinking ...  
Sitting back watching the game erode ...  
*But you said ... Yeah, I said ...*  
You have just finished off the cinnamon chips  
and are about to start in on the scones ...  
The lapdogs have friended your lap  
and your old neighborhood  
where they desperately seek members  
of the opposite sex  
for tag-team go-arounds ... and get-togethers ...  
Close encounters with pea soup? ...  
Enough, already! ...  
You were always good ... at coding  
telephone numbers on matchbooks.com  
tracking the cyanescent stuff flying through our lives ...  
Whatever happened to comparison shopping? ...  
But he/she is married, you know! ... Yes, and? ...  
Even the snow is not *perfectly harmless* ...

53

Sailing along on a knee scooter ...  
Cutting the fat ... at the local vegan cafe ...  
The eyes of March ... upon you ... up and down ...  
up and down ...  
as you ... YouTubed, too! ... do a *slow*

comic-strip-tese ...  
A feel-good feeling ...  
the conceptual neuroses ... out to lunch ...  
The last time? ...  
Pumping iron ... with fast foodies ...  
Returning the wrong turn ...  
ODing on the (un)commonplace ...  
You are a party ... talking  
with an interesting stranger ...  
The poor service ... at Big Belly Deli? ...  
Not! ... A piece of cake? ... under glass ...  
have you ever? ...  
Bloating ... across the universe ...  
Everything in check, yes? ...  
These are a few ... of your favorite things? ...

54

The stuttering of a passing train  
conjures the pace of the next chapter  
assigning roles to puppy-dog extras  
voices slipping through night's open windows ...  
OK, time for a rewrite, yes? ... Chapter One:  
*For a long time, I went to bed early ...*  
No, no, it has to be symphonic ... polyphonic ...  
not unlike the phantasmagoric upside-down phase  
of the moon ...  
You escape yourself into the best of times ...  
the worst of times ...  
departing with your tail of two cities  
between your long, lovely, flirtatious legs ...  
There was a moment ... not long ago  
when you walked on the moon ...  
sang torch songs ... in the shower ...  
with abandon ...  
coloring my world  
with a muted, earthy palette ...  
I feel compelled to keep reading ... from here ...  
Try this: ...  
*I went over to his/her house ...*



*We hung out...listening to music...*  
It's not a lie...just a different story...  
transforming the elegant murkiness of your dissonance  
into a story of recovery...  
a story of ravishing incandescence...  
It's late...  
Why bother with further revisions?...  
When was the last time you thought it was the last time?...

55

The message in the spaces between your words...  
Hieroglyphics of time travelers...  
Held by the Sirens...dangerous yet beautiful  
as in a bank shot...off the felt...  
How often do we lash ourselves to the mast...  
unwanted company in tow?...  
Your glazed single-mindedness continues  
to stomp the stars...premiering in separate volumes as you  
requested...  
Vendors in place with made-for-TV dinners...

56

*Once upon a time, there was a boy who lived in a house  
across a field, from a girl who no longer exists. They  
made up a thousand games.*

- Nicole Krauss, *The History of Love*

You slip through security...  
a red thong beneath your industrial chic...  
texting your past  
with complimentary smile and chocolates...  
Across town...in the back room of a dilapidated stage...  
a man and a woman...play musical beds...  
The history of hookups again concedes  
one too many mornings...  
On coffee break...Rilke:  
*Think...of the world you carry within you...*

57

Your dream of speed skating skins ...  
A cautionary tale ... consequential ... prophetic ...  
with some reckoning ... unduly noted ...  
Consider this moment ... costume ...  
etched on the back wall of a makeshift lean-to ...  
tucked deep among evergreens ...  
You have become a stranger to no one reeling  
from a succession of stand-up comics in short order ...  
Not unlike a town hall wrap-up, yes? ...

58

An alcoholic sky takes you on a tour of promises  
and players from long ago who failed  
to make the grade ...  
A neon calm ... surprisingly as incredible  
as overdue library books ... among flotsam ...  
Break out the crayons! ... time tunnel time! ...  
Decked out in the latest ... excepting of course  
those with doll-like countenances ...

59

You venture beyond the line à la Agnes Martin ...  
Conversation flattens ...  
A stranger squeezes through the chink  
in your consciousness ...  
This is a change ...  
The colors of your palette ... double ...  
influencing the grid ... making notations  
in a purple unlined moleskin notebook  
late at night ... with a glass of pinot noir ...

60

Arresting in your DIY raingear ...  
Talking ... then not ... about the uninformed ...  
Searching for gold rings

from childhood carousels ...  
You flick a match ... geese trail ...  
a downward, vertiginous drag ...  
scaring the hell out of the neighborhood  
on trial for lassitude ...  
I choose not to believe in malaise ...  
And why should I ... especially when lonely new hires scale  
skyscrapers ...  
regurgitating lexicons of bad French? ...  
So what if acting is lying? ...  
Again, who is this week's designated optimist? ...  
Can you please pick up the pace? ...  
I'm about to implode  
from your latest fashion foray! ...  
Smoke and mirrors ... smoke and mirrors ...  
In the company of magicians ... Damn, that was, yes? ...

61

Your advanced degrees in truthiness  
blow away the competition ...  
Picnicking at this stage may be iffy ...  
but what the hell ...  
When Reveille sounds ...  
Where will you be? ...  
Where will I be? ...  
Where will we be? ...  
Pick one ...  
Moments like these arrive ever so flimsily  
and do not hang ... trust me ...  
Please don't trot out  
those timeworn harbingers ...  
You have more important \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_ ...  
You owe it to yourself  
and to the memory of your shades of grey ...  
In the mirror with multiple personalities ...

62

You find zodiacal fantasies intriguing ...

the creepy violins ...  
the dowagers with heads full of strangers ...  
There are 20 people at this table  
name-tagged and color-coded ...  
Who are they? ... Why are they here? ...  
The game of chance ... out the door ...  
You picture your dream house  
and hope that he/she will agree ...  
The building codes are like Mary Magdalene ...  
They require a full head of steam ...  
Strange but you could swear  
you've been here before ...  
Your feet seem to know their way around ...  
even in these tight shoes  
which you regret wearing ...  
Outside, the moon keeps getting bigger ...  
Soon it will threaten the oldest members  
of the household ... who drink tea  
out of complimentary census cups ...  
You've had some great tutors in your time ...  
kindly attentive in their ministrations ...  
and hope they will hear of your admiration ...

63

You worry portraiture in an age  
of abstraction ...  
The narrative ... reductive ... unreliable ...  
omitting the minor albeit valuable occlusions  
as in the convenience of a convenience store ...  
Irrevocably ascertainable ...  
Yes, include that in your little purple moleskin ...  
You have erased all nuance  
with your prefigured reportage ...  
What to do now? ...  
Not nearly as obscure or unnoticed ...  
Your world as being ever-so-slightly askew ...  
Have you attracted big names to your stable? ...  
Hand-held cameras, by all means! ...  
You ended it, after encouraging multiple interpretations

with your carefully orchestrated texts ...  
Intimidation feeds trashing, yes? ...  
Nonetheless, you remain a perspicacious analyst ...  
at least in your electra glide in blue eyes ...

64

Trying to get it all down ...  
The people ... artificially illuminated ...  
barely moving ...  
awash with languor ...  
Continents apart ... but not estranged ...  
You know the feeling ...  
Obsessively bookish ... in sumptuous robes ...  
The Jaguar XJS strumming gloomily along the boulevard ...  
answering retro prayers  
in the order they were received  
converting them to vinyl  
for custom turntables ... and such ...  
This is all part of immortality, yes? ...  
You are here ... now ... later ... where? ...

65

Unread pages fly past ... corners folded ...  
How could you have missed so many? ...  
Element collectors thin the air with regrets ...  
small, medium, large ... extra large ...  
Periodically, a table is turned ...  
the adjacency sputtering search engines ...  
Your past ... appears at the door ...  
costumed ... and ready ...  
Reshoot the desktop scene ... X+1 times ...  
For the fun of it, yes? ...  
Little will happen inside the Russian novel  
that has not already happened ... to you ...  
You hop on your tricycle, backpedal ...  
stall for time ... preparing your opening ...  
You have 60 seconds ...

You try to tease a narrative  
 out of the earwormed tune ...  
 Putting words to music, yes? ...  
 His/her words ...  
 Materializing late at night ...  
 keeping you up ...  
 The failed metric ...  
 Running the numbers ...  
 Naming things ... to possess them ...  
 Morphed into a diorama ...  
 with you as principal unprincipled player ...  
 Cutting the Gordian knot ... binding the two ...  
 Leaving you speechless at checkout ...  
 The inevitable pileup ...  
 You penned the lines ... then lost them ...  
 They're here ... somewhere ...  
 They have to be ...  
 You can't help but search  
 for meaning, hidden intentions, what have you ...  
 And still at it, yes? ...

The marks on the floor designate your movements ...  
 There are marks on the floor designating your movements ...  
 The marks on the floor ...  
 Are they your movements? ...  
 The rationale will become as clear as the marks ...  
 Just play along, yes? ...  
 OK, I understand ties that bind ...  
 Seriously, though ... with bated breath ...  
 You assumed the role ... embraced it? ...  
 for how many years? ...  
 Next time ... follow the script  
 to the letter, as it were ...  
 to the letter writer ... if need be ...  
 to the underwriter ... bankrolling your role ...  
 to the undercurrent ... carrying you to secret rooms ...

brimming with autoeroticisms ...  
Really? ... Can you tell the difference once you're seized? ...

68

Low-flying incubi ... slip past your naiyete  
morphing into anonymous flights of fantasy  
through back-door labyrinths ...  
costumed ... non-forwarding ...  
clubbing ... with hometown favorites ...  
who off-nights blow town  
leaving you stringing memories into necklaces  
of prayer beads ...  
You have re-upped for a tour of Facebook  
with interim partners  
slotted for make-believe ...  
Bless me, Father, for I have ...  
again ... and again ... and again ...

69

The body below the surface ... as  
deep ... deeper ... deepest ...  
Tracing the image ... in hieroglyphics ...  
Your seductions ... the beauty of the gesture ...  
Walking ... as if no one ... or everyone ...  
is listening ...  
Interrogating the rain ... to find solace  
in fortune's half-smile ...  
in the choral singing wafting in ... sotto voce ...  
Outwardly ... everything copacetic ...  
The feeble attempt to escape ...  
Your long arms ... a semaphore ... signaling  
from an archaeological dig ... where too much has been  
unearthed ...  
As if, yes, I too have been victimized ...

70

Trafficking in embellishments to enhance palatability? ...

As a CIA grad in checkered chef pants  
providing expert testimony on condiments ...  
You have discovered the power of the tongue ...  
This ... a delightful sidebar ...  
How often to get the maximum benefit (nodding off in the  
corner)? ...

*Sublimation: A User's Guide ...*

DJing at your favorite club ...

dismissing quandaries ...

There will be hell to pay ...

Pesky offshoots ... hacked ...

Think Backgammon ... or Parcheesi ...

You have linked the rulebook to memory sites ...

Flagging Step 1 through Step X ...

Jotting notes in reverse script ...

imagining the mirror ... and the surface ...

and the convolutions ... of the body ...

71

The enchanting cosmos of the dressing room ...

The ultimate in gymnastics ...

angularities ... contours ... condiments ...

Noodling as movement ... as improvisation ...

as just plain winging-it ...

Rearranging (?) molecules ...

unveiling sights, sounds, tastes

with your bag of tricks ...

with your enigmatic coat of arms ...

Mixing the now ... piece ... by piece ... by piece ...

Everyone a star-struck star ...

The show to go on ... with or without ...

72

You've muted the video ... chugged a Red Bull

and pressed *Stoner* into hands-a-plenty ...

In the thrall of the latest, yes? ...

Distracting us from the anguish of our inner lives? ...

The anguish of *Days of Our Lives*? ...



Many prefer the heaven of a false religion...  
I've tired of color-coding the hours of pumped-iron...  
P90X-ing away the mood swings...  
Alternating subtleties with highlighting...  
Tweet the food network...  
for closure ... and retribution ...

73

But you said M-E-T-A-P-H-Y-S-I-C-A-L...  
with hurricane asides and aspirin(g) temps ...  
Not to be duped ...  
Not to feel the pressure of the curtain call...  
Categorizing thumbnails ... surreptitiously ...  
Then posting to Facebook ...  
Some have been retrieved ... recycled ... rekindled ...  
A brief history of machines, yes? ...  
Awaiting your signature ...  
Your dreams of boredom in the present moment...  
A cavalcade of tenses ...  
Speaking-in-tongues ... for those without a voice ...  
Fondling your depression ... as if tweaking ...

74

Eloping with a plastic horse  
in the not-too-distant future ...  
Nights of entrepreneurial fantasies ... and bone-dust...  
the morality police on donutbreak...  
Finding yourself mired in old habits? ...  
Perhaps you should cut back on the insinuations ...  
the invocations ... the intrusions ...  
on your propensity for clipping coupons  
from the flyers blizzarding the stairwell ... lawsuits  
swooping down ...  
Yes, retreat to your domesticity ...  
to your panoply of impressions ...  
little-girl-lost ... dominatrix ... intermediary ...  
single-malted ... primed for rewrite ...  
Forget the bed-head ...

Your optic nerve knows better than anyone ...  
Including the homebrew crew ... most of whom have become  
homebound paying the Joker ... for box-lunch time-outs ...  
waiting to deplane ... and be in ... again ...  
As the mind gently bloats ... it will all come into focus ...

75

Losing yourself in the unbearable lightness ...  
Leaving marginalia at all hours ... in a dead language ...  
Your sadness ... a three-ring binder ...  
Waiting to be sprung ... from the hoosegow ...  
with Facebook friends ... there when you were ...  
A mystic ... robed in an earthy palette ...  
coloring the shore-lapping waves ...  
Happiness has been asking around ... looking for you ...  
and will find you ... on opening day ...  
pinch-hitting ... in a double-header ...  
The crowd ... always the crowd ... on its feet ...

76

A tollbooth in your gut, and you are religioned  
sampling the steps ... to a confessional  
where you ... in 25 or fewer words  
spin tales of toil and trouble ...  
The rule book disintegrates ...  
Elementary particles fly around the room ...  
lodge in your tantrum ... jolt the body into words ...  
Despite your self-abnegation ... you have the gist ...  
You can always buy out ... or be bought out ...

77

A foreign movie moment à la Jung's *personal unconscious* ...  
Unexpectedly riveting ...  
Several books tucked into the bedside ... a late night  
tete-a-tete ...  
Someone with a puzzled look says something about the  
lighting ...

Morandi still lifes color the corners  
following a sojourn to 7-Eleven  
where textures continue to speak to us ...  
The subtle convergence of you ... centerfold ...  
donating part of your welcome to unsaid promises  
lurking behind the lilacs in the front yard ...  
pneumatic hammers going up against  
pro bono ball handlers ...  
Your exiting in the middle as directed by one of your many  
admirers ...  
Settle down? ... Poppycock! ...

78

*And though the news was rather sad, well I just had to laugh.*  
- The Beatles, *A Day in the Life*

You're disinclined to collaborate with biopics  
citing no wish to have images explain your text ...  
Next to impossible? ... Not! ...  
You put in for a 17-year hiatus ... and threaten a walkabout  
then segue to a meditation on fantasies ...  
*Toy Story 5? ...*  
Stepping out ... of your comfort zone? ...  
Without the necessary paperwork? ...  
For shame! ... Ninepins fail stress tests, you know ...  
but who cares? ...  
Your spellcheck's *Cupertino Effect* has got you  
in hot water ... again! ...  
Next time ... Oh, there won't be a next time? ...  
Said the spider to the fly ...

79

*In spite of all, some shape of beauty moves away the pall from  
our dark spirits.*  
- Bianca Stone

A complimentary glass of wine ... and you are happy with the  
grape ...

You had hoped to escape the weekend but it arrived... with  
doubles... and now your car is barking... and you refuse to  
make the best of it...

Practicing with crayons has brought you here  
to this place of unintentional Hamlets  
where tragic refrigerators with doors removed pucker front  
stoops...

How can you continue to pump iron... with headlights as  
fact checkers?...

Does it bother you that your tank top is doing all the  
talking?...

I know you've been here before... so please drop the wide-eye  
appropriated when no one was looking from the local  
library-a-go-go...

80

*Does anybody really care?*

- Chicago, *Does Anybody Really Know What Time It Is?*

You've hopscotched past the point of no return  
standing on your head?...

Your house slowly slipping away...

Your signed copy of *The Complete Poems of John Donne* ...  
ditto...

You are not alone... again...

You have installed an *OED* app and submitted a proposal  
to an RFP...

A muted palette awaits your random keystrokes...

Your project to interview retired earworms is on hold...

What about the conifers you tagged  
on your road trip along Highway 51?...

They're waiting for the green light...

I've heard you've agreed to ditch the handbag...  
the moleskin notebook...

the conundrum nesting on your bedpost...

Are you sure you're OK with that?...

Your wish for an elemental calm... has been duly noted!...

Forwarding email addresses as a way of touching base ...  
 They come and go...come and go...  
 Following desire lines...I suppose... through the darkness  
 of chapters ...  
 Mapping the squalls in relationships ...  
 You are so close ...  
 Your tomatoes did 90 seconds with Dr. Oz ...  
 Your tank top was a runner...up ...  
 Will the summer be a one-piece or a two-piece?...

You no longer walk the imaginary streets of commuter  
 bicycles ...  
 the streets of blackened windows  
 teeming with unidentified flying people ...  
 Your refrigerator hit the road...weeks ago ...  
 You need a break... in the action ...  
 A time-out room of your own ...  
 A place to rethink tweets ...  
 Yes, we've read your messages on rocks  
 and tagged passages for rereads and analysis ...  
 The summer has emailed your invitation ...  
 Your sandcastle on the beach...a halfway house  
 filled with linen...and run-on sentences ...  
 awaits your admission ...  
 You can hardcopy your books there  
 and gift summer people  
 who wander the dunes with metal detectors  
 in search of lost episodes ...  
 The image in the mirror wants to take you shopping  
 for the costume you climbed out of at the responsible party  
 where you were fingered for obsessive crayoning ...  
 What a trip!... Bring on the appetizers!...

Your erotic other made the front page ...

A manage a trois in toyland...  
Well...not really...but...  
the bag of groceries on the counter had it in for you  
and answered a few rhetorical questions...  
Your recipes were seized...and earwormed...  
your memoir is up up and away...  
Finding meaning in the darndest places  
is always on the tip of your tongue...  
Think of the good times!...Scads!...

84

Obsessing over line breaks...and selfies...  
walking the runway in tees and baggy shorts...  
Everything akimbo...in the camera...  
As it should be, yes?...  
Transposing overtime hours  
for incidental streetwalkers  
texting continuing education customers...  
Kicking back...for the sake of monkeyshines...

*WAMC Fun(d) Drive...*  
1-800-323-9262...  
1-800-323-9262...

How often to recalibrate makeovers?...  
To engage classic finger puppets from TV's Golden Age?...  
And to think you filled several notebooks with choreography  
notation mixed later into Facebook fudge...  
overwriting identical scenes from interim corner stores...  
I know...you could have danced all night...  
and you did!...

85

You pass through me...through others...and into another  
world...  
The easy sway of either/or...  
The pretense of fanaticism...  
Your hands messaging...

writing inked legs out of the scene ...  
Convulsions torquing the body ...  
catch and release ... catch and release ...  
The camera's panoramic view  
from across the room ...  
from across the years ...  
You venture a costume ... worry semantics ...  
hanker to tell the next person you meet ...  
but then ... on second or third ... rewinding ...  
smudging the spoiler ... eulogized  
in *Confessions of a White Widowed Male* ...  
What better way to catapult? ...  
Looking at you ... seeing themselves ...  
The new avatar is a better fit ... as promised ...  
for the new you, yes? ...

86

You enter a room ... forget why ... read ... then not ...  
The dumbness of the day ... of putting one word  
in front of another ...  
Of putting your hands in your pockets ...  
Of putting your hands in his/her pockets ...  
The intimation of intimacy ...  
Of finding someone's clothes in your closet ...  
Of finding someone on the other side of the bed ...  
Have you forgotten about the tickets ...  
the quart of milk ... low-fat ...  
the gestures ... out of balance ... of yet another day? ...  
The loneliness of long distance running  
past freshly mowed lawns ...  
the scent of green filling your nostrils ...  
You can't wait ... to tell someone ...  
To re-string the instrument ... unplayed for far too long ...  
A question of sooner or later ... Your wish  
to become a blankness ... forestalled ...

87

Floating the alphabet ... sorting letters by propinquity ...

pockets bulging with bipolarity ...  
Passersby pondering evening meals look askance ...  
Always maybe-ing ... taking a nosedive ...  
slipping out the back door ...  
The guard on restroom break ...  
If only I had held it together ...  
Yes, your candor is splendid ...  
unintentionally wholesome ...  
Walking the dog through miniscule neighborhoods reeking  
in-law apartments ...  
A certain multiple-choice question  
tracking your movements ...  
Especially those having to do with offshoots ...  
*I coulda been a contender ...*  
The expanded version available ...  
for a limited time ...  
Unavailable to non-subscribers ...  
You have failed for a nominal fee to wonder why once too  
often ...

88

What if one prefers deadpan to domesticity? ...  
Or the passage of time? ...  
Evidence the layered look ...  
the look of the other ...  
Driving nails into foreign objects as well ...  
You refuse insignificance ... stab at salads ...  
A watering-down of attributes ...  
Walkouts are not uncommon ... at this point ...  
Imagining re-entry you chat up  
seasonal changes ... and how  
if he/she embraces the timeworn ...  
the frequency overridden ...  
Some are colorless, bloodless, ageless ...  
Rawboned ... with spiked hair ...  
chopped not trimmed ...  
Cloaked in Noh drama ...  
Is the spinning you or the room? ...  
Upstaged ... again ...



as outlined on page 145...

89

Intrigued by costumes ... as always ...  
The intricacies of assemblage ...  
of making do with lost and found ...  
and lost again ...  
You knew the items that qualified ...  
But you wrote them off ... and pressed ~~Send~~ ...  
There will be talk ... you know ... down the road ...  
As expected, yes? ...  
To your dismay ... he/she presented with paper flowers ...  
A 180-degree pantomime ... then moved away ...  
to return ... every year ... for summer stock ...

90

Your mouth plays house ... with a conflict of interest ...  
The one you chatted up last night before you were spirited  
away ...  
This seems to suit you ... little concern for the moment ...  
Slathering SPF-60 on your hot spots ...  
What exactly are you referring to? ...  
Everything seems to have a caveat ...  
Once upon a time I feared nothing ...  
Your soliloquy is being edited for irrelevancies ...

91

As if inhabiting another's body ... and advancing to the  
*Seventh Level* ...  
The accoutrements of attachment? ...  
The fit and finish? ...  
You were caught in the act ... lip-syncing ...  
faking it ... head thrown back into the odyssey, yes? ...  
So tell me about the friend of a friend of a friend ...  
The players ... and their parts ... Indeed! ...  
With no intention of more? ...  
Reaching back for the fat atoms of a Melville ...

*The drama's done... all are departed away...*  
*The great shroud of the sea... Wait!... Wait!...*  
Testing... 1, 2, 3... Testing... 1, 2, 3...  
Later still... you will... again... be mesmerized...

92

You worry throwaways and the integrity  
of string bikinis...  
The line drawn in the sand...  
Updating your calendar with past liaisons  
from *The Land of What Was*...  
Tomorrow will be by-subscription-only  
for all who failed the unveiling of the obelisk  
inscribed with your internal dialogues...  
Your eagerness steps into the viewfinder  
resisting the urge to cliché in *Looney Tunes*...  
Everyone is calling for hasty pudding...  
Several have taken flight...  
as late-model catchphrases...

93

Imagining the gazebo... the afternoon wet with lemonade...  
the all-but-naked doubts... cast aside...  
Rummaging... then rummaging more...  
Your *Book of Days* unfolding...  
its momentum abrupt...  
This is a work of fiction...  
Of course, you make your way through to the last dot-com...  
I can think of nothing... but the aftertaste...  
the moments before you were up... and onto others...  
Have you considered remapping  
the palms of your hands?...  
You too will be blind-copied... and shared...  
deconstructed... long-listed and all that...  
Perhaps... some day... you will revisit the remains  
of that day...  
Is it ever too late to drop from a cloudless sky?...

We all have moments of  
 eighth-grade-slow-dance-stiffness ...  
 The tram ... in a lucrative dreamscape ...  
 Here but not here, yes? ...  
 Tap dancing in and around words ...  
 The players ... and their steps ... receding ...  
 A Motel 6 accepts applications  
 for the (bed)post position ...  
 Trying to recapture something lost ...  
 on the page, the screen, the canvas ...  
 Something lost ... somewhere ...  
 And you ... hammering, drilling, patching ...  
 One gets exhausted with repairs ...  
 begins to dismantle the illusion ...

You're writing a fictional memoir about yourself ...  
 Rigorously honest traffic in the street below ...  
 wants in ...  
 There are enough characters for everyone  
 and they know who they are ... floating along  
 on your stream of consciousness ...  
 playing tag team hide-and-seek ...  
 You begin misquoting yourself ...  
 a game of mirrors ...  
 and discover elements of style  
 earmarked for bronzing ...  
 The excitement of the scam carries you back  
 to the old neighborhood ...  
 Philip Seymour Hoffman's *Synecdoche* ...  
 the soundstage a drug deal gone south ...  
 A humorless pharmacist - a woman -  
 will be implicated ...  
 Her pink sundress texts passersby ...  
 who couldn't care less  
 about the outcome of this poem ...

Skywriting with hammertoes  
 into the wee-wee hours ...  
 Committing hara-kiri ... to memory ...  
 The stew ... burning a hole  
 in your Face(book) ...  
 Blackened rubble adding panache ... to the neighborhood  
 choked with overnight bags, lycras, energy drinks ...  
 What better way to spend a day than sexting  
 inked gym rats? ...  
 A pick-up game of Pick-Up Sticks mystifies some  
 excepting those negotiating to deprive you  
 of your past with its incessant meandering  
 and *Last Tango* ...

The street noise ... like starched centipedes ...  
 Legs! ... Legs! ... Legs! ...  
 Wait ... then wait again ...  
 haunted by the pretty strange ...  
 You bleach yourself on the ground floor ...  
 Enter the infinite loop of a roundabout ...  
 Editing as you go ...  
 A former doll factory looms ...  
 Trying on different torsos ...  
 There will be moments, yes? ...  
 with the opening bars of *Night Train* ...  
 No one is running out to sign the next poseur ...  
 As much as you would like to think ...  
 Perhaps your prayers (?) are making a dent? ...

Your memoir ... stalks me ... disrupts REM sleep  
 going on and on ... and on ...  
 Scaffolding giving way  
 exposing the true north of your words ...  
 Why smooth out the edges? ...

They were part of it, yes? ...  
The tranquil dance of images paid your way ...  
The trombonist in the wings ... keys them in ...  
resurrects them ...  
refuses the chart ...  
You as hooker in purple pumps  
replaying the scene ...  
Why the reference to Holden? ...

99

You begin to tire of the School of General Studies ...  
Read ... Fill your head ... Write ... Rewrite ...  
An amalgam of personas ...  
Frightfully accommodating  
as if on a stifling mid-August afternoon  
a portal opens onto a palazzo  
filled with mannequins  
waiting for the Q&As ...  
Later, a cache of memories dumps ...  
The next will be 10 furlongs  
in brightly-colored silks ...  
Have you placed your bet? ...  
You know what the oddsmakers are saying ...  
Take in the latest exhibit ...  
The facades ... in abundance ...  
people-watching ...  
Carl (Jung) would be tickled ...  
You can always tap dance or engage passersby ...  
Some have grown old ... unrecognizable ...  
*The Lexicon of the Ancients* ... and then some ...

100

You pluck days from oblivion ... some maddeningly  
repetitive ...  
memorializing them ... as space full of time ...  
The canvases thick stretchers ... tombstone-like ...  
In the painting's silence the noisy tumult  
of history ... reflecting the language

and grammar...of cardboard communities...  
You insist on arm-wrestling with dumb reality  
ticking off insignificant others  
who played a role  
in your counter-intelligence phase...  
The clock sweating the hours  
yet the jarring welcoming...  
A portal...into the moment...escaping as a fraying  
automaton...

101

Your pics of random lives...were scanned and planted  
in the garden of earthy delights...  
The fornicators at the gates...were ticketed...  
for presumption...for irreverence...for smoking in a  
smoke-free zone...  
You became a stop sign...then a traffic signal...  
You were written up and out of the series...  
It was a time of rewrites...  
and inadvertent cups of black coffee...  
Illegibility was offered...in good faith...  
Rutherford, New Jersey took its toll...  
Your next portfolio will feature a full-speed-ahead full-  
bodied conceit...  
filled with ooh la la's...and unlimited seconds...

102

You are a coming attraction...hoping for a roundabout...  
planning for your (weekend) getaway...  
We were into cops and robbers...  
filling gaps in our education  
with cans of Reddi-wip...  
Your trio sang ditties from *The Great American Songbook*...  
I made my way through the throng  
and around 25 or 6 to 4...  
I was lucky enough to score an Eskimo Bar...open 24/7...  
I believed in you up to the last unclut  
then pride floored it...and sped away with nary a

nanosecond to spare ...  
You majored in internal affairs ...  
kissing thunderstorms in lingerie ads ...  
tracking forgotten boxcars in sidings ...  
while threatening upheavals in coping mechanisms ...  
International trysts left you speechless  
at deli counters ...  
You had trouble with branding ...  
*No big deal, maestro!* ...  
There's a time and place for such levity ... I'm told ...

103

Recalcitrant memories flood the boardwalk ...  
You opt for a facelift  
channeling Charles *The Hammer* Martel  
at the Battle of Tours ...  
*Don't forget the Cuisinart...* he said reportedly ...  
And that has made all the difference ...  
The whole food stamp thing ...  
You could have at least prepped me for the EBT ...  
I spilled my guts to the court jester ...  
a mannequin born out of wedlock  
living on food stamps in an old shoe ...  
Just when it was all about to come together ... it didn't ...  
These things happen ... I was told ... in fourth grade ...  
Reach out and touch someone ... make nice ...  
Does good grammar really matter? ...  
I mean *really* matter? ...  
*Mind over matter matters little*, she said ...  
then pulled the ripcord for the bigger picture ...  
I was inside-out and upside-down through most of it ...

104

Alterations aside, the ambiance begs furniture music ...  
The idea here is to replay the hand ...  
return to the scene, the line, the moment ...  
rearrange the room ...  
ride out claustrophobia ...

slouching towards foreclosure...  
wannabes in hot pursuit... Incidentally,  
the place settings are chomping (champing?) at the bit...  
Ring up the neighborhood grammarian...  
For reassurance, yes?...  
Did you expect less?...  
OK, it's not a bona fide trip to Bountiful but pretty close...  
Besides, you have relegated yourself  
to the path of least resistance  
and now lost souls are lining up... for direction  
and free grub...

105

*...but it's much more.*

- Patti Smith, *Dream of Rimbaud*

You have become inevitable... inviolable... transformed...  
Offhand remarks about spiritual accidents...  
Open your books to the gazpacho recipe on page 396...  
Headstone rubbings... at the feet  
of Percy Shelley... with Gregory Corso, yes!...  
*Illuminations!*... of course!... pellucid... strange...  
On to the lost voyage in Java...  
It was a very good year!...  
Comparing notes... if only...  
*I wanted to insert an etching... she said...*  
and continued taking pictures  
of Coney Island rekindled... with blinders...  
Can you imagine?...  
You meet for coffee... chat old times  
populated by players from shipless waves...  
Expect more...  
Remove the scaffolding... jump in...  
There are only so many hours...  
*Standing on the corner...*  
*Watching all the girls go by...*  
The Mesozoic Era saw the spread of true conifers...



You fiddle with contextual cues and chunks of raw idiom...  
 Coming up with a surface  
 that's supposed to evoke real life...  
 Methinks you're walking on eggshells...  
 And the conversations - the arguments - we have...  
 with ourselves...  
 Testing the waters... as traffic speeds past... faster, then  
 faster still...  
 Orchestrating the fit... even on the bleakest days...  
 There's so much more...  
 OK, in a weird way... but so what?...  
 Asking yourself *Who wrote that?*...  
 Rereading past exchanges... trying to figure out where your  
 head was at...  
 These flip decisions laid the groundwork for you... now...  
 Recanting posts?... But of course!...  
 Busying yourself with channel surfing?...  
 To say nothing of confusion's seductive fun?...  
 Past players insinuate themselves... the heretical nature  
 thereof...  
 You likely thought you could pass muster as one of many...  
*Whatever you say, boss, yes?...*  
 Shifting into high gear... trolling night stalkers...  
 But what of the provenance of your latest acquisition?...  
 The one you saved your hard-earned pennies for...  
 and won on eBay?...  
 Please don't trot out the Bucket List  
 this early in the quarter...

You go back and search for lines you know are there...  
 The streets costumed... beyond the page...  
 Taillights of big rigs hum songs your mother sang...  
 Why now... when you can see three moves ahead?...  
 The color of checkmate... filed under... *Wait and see...*  
 Trying too hard to think through summer, yes?...  
 The reasons for your enjambment... your entrancement...

your entrapment... Your eyes as sandwich boards...  
dancing in the street... with whomever...  
studying the trailer for *Coming Attractions*...  
restarting... after years of shutdown...  
Heads up to your father flipping burgers  
in a backyard of friends...  
No serious entanglements...  
From here we can follow bread crumbs back  
to the way we were...

108

*And what are you?*

- Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*

Is the answer in the laminated hardcovers in the library  
or with the dust bunnies under the couch?  
Are you the eggman?...  
Haven't you forgotten something?...  
Why bother?...  
Have you turned the page?...  
Or a new leaf?...  
Do you ever drive around aimlessly?...  
Or find yourself elsewhere?...  
Are you in the moment?...  
Where were you on the evening of the 27th?...  
Are all your ducks in a row?...  
Were you able to get a word in edgewise?...  
What about the tandem?...  
And the line drawn in the sand?...  
Do you have a moment to spare?...  
Or the time?...  
Would you like to begin again?...  
Or start over?...  
Is this a photo op?...  
Have you ever tried to make do?...  
Or repainted a room?...  
Or done the wrong thing?...  
Or regretted the color of your hair?...  
Or done enough?...

If not then what? ...  
Do you fear being called up? ...  
Or called back? ...  
Where's the finish line? ...  
Is this a good idea? ...  
When was the last time you sang out of tune? ...  
When was the last time you stood up  
and walked out? ...  
Do you believe in love? ...  
Do you believe in love at first sight? ...  
Do you believe in magic? ...  
Have you ever been left behind? ...  
Or left out? ...  
Or left of center? ...  
Do you like to pick and choose? ...  
Does the end of summer come with a renewal? ...  
Have you ever been caught in a meteor shower? ...  
Or accused of insignificance? ...  
Or shortsightedness? ...  
Is wallowing in pity in your future? ...  
Can you see through bullshit? ...  
Do you listen to mourning doves? ...  
Do you tingle when trees bend? ...  
Is your lexicon up to snuff? ...  
Can you repopulate the stars? ...  
Do you enjoy the sun? ...  
Were you ever a feature? ...  
Have you ever found tears on your pillow? ...  
Or coins in the fountain?  
Have you ever put it in reverse? ...  
And claimed otherwise? ...  
Or pleaded ignorance? ...  
Is life passing you by? ...  
Has it passed you by? ...  
Have you been passed over? ...  
Has the past passed? ...  
Do you pine for the passing lane? ...  
Is there no turning back? ...  
Or you-turning? ...

*All the strangers came today...*

- David Bowie, *Oh, You Pretty Things!*

Hickory Dickory disappeared ... into a maelstrom of iPhones  
and opened with an (under)cover band in Erie, Oklahoma...

*This is not America!*...

So you start the day ... as a whirling dervish  
with a promise to be all you can be ...

Spotted deer join you ... for a rehearsal at an  
archaeological dig ...

It's all very innocent, yes? ...

Especially the painted pines ... and the puzzled man  
in the corner of your room ... questioning your motives ...

You have five minutes ... six, maybe ...

You step on the gas ... and speed away ...

Between the first and second stanza, you glance  
at the side camera ...

This scene will be re-shot ... *n* number of times ...

Lip-sync acts of contrition ... *Sus palabras son mis  
palabras*, yes? ...

with attitude and opulently attractive subscriber ...

Practice the left hand first ... over and over ...

Over and under ... the giveaway ...

The relief ... neither contented nor plangent ...

*I can see forever!* ...

Continue, please ... into the next scene ...

Stem the fat tide of amateurish, insensitive nightmares ...

As opined by the jilted late night visitor

circumnavigating your bed ...

notebook in hand ...

*Tell me how to lose myself!* ...

Demijohns and pottery bottles ... notwithstanding ...

filled with silvery dried honesty ... and limited repeats ...

A smattering of inconsistencies ...  
 your hands are not yours ...  
 At twelve, you were fingered ... for something ...  
 I'll be right back ... I need to check the playbook ...  
 The solitary cyclist from the sideshow  
 followed by herds of doubters ... dressed to kill ...  
 You've been identified as a player-at-large ...  
*Here's the part where he/she asks a question ...*  
 The takeaway is anything you desire ...  
 It's a type of sleight-of-hand ... the type we all fall for ...  
 The playlist jams ... the silence dumbfounding ...  
 Filling in the gaps ... haphazardly ... is cheap ...  
 You inhale the room ...  
 unbeknownst to the rest of the cast  
 who have left the scene (of the crime) in a New York minute ...

But then the loose ends ... you know? ... with what's  
 his/her name threatening to push the envelope ...  
 Your autobiography ... unplugged ... off limits ...  
 to the general public ...  
 and the inscrutability ... a turn on ...  
 maybe even more so ... for you ...  
 It's one thing to say you'll follow through ...  
 The audience on the edge of their seats ...  
 Of course there will be googling ...  
 And you ... for affect was it? ... mumbling hints ...  
 as only you ... the quintessential tease ...  
 with a twist of lime ... could ...  
 finessing the move as you mirrored yourself ...  
 Fragments of ancient statuary ... cluttering  
 your mind's walkup ...

Speaking in tongues to besotted dustbunnies ...  
*Cutie and the Boxer ... Chaucerian ... with sprinkles ...*

taking you back... to the corner eye-candy store ...  
where nightly you'd buy into the theory  
of *come what may*  
and risk becoming your costume ...  
nostrils engorged with *Uneiform Days* ...  
your version of Blake's unexpurgated  
*Songs of Innocence* ...  
Wild nights should have been your luxury ...  
your legacy ... but you were misrepresented  
in letters of introduction ...  
wind chimes closeting your empty promises ...  
delivery vans warming up ...  
You expected more ... we all did ...  
but were left at the crossroads ... in that movie ...  
most have forgotten ...

114

You count out ten paces ...  
You will continue to revisit this ... in costume ...  
demanding a refund ... and the capture of irrelevancies ...  
McDonald's wrappers soaking the passenger seat ...  
Your mental acumen ... naked in the bedroom ...  
answers 20 questions ...  
The eyes in the window ...  
Growing at dawn ... Imagine the buzz! ...  
You have rubbed the relationship raw ... the reality  
balderdash ...  
A fool channel surfing as an excuse ...

115

You pace yourself with mediocre red wine  
preparing for a trip to Pier 1 ...  
rattan and bamboo haying kept you up all night ...  
A Wittgenstein lookalike passes ... at a loss for words ...  
He waits tables ... weather permitting ...  
and is the neighborhood Trivial Pursuit Champ ...  
His real life is more complicated ...  
One day you will forget who you are ...

Your shoes will switch feet...  
Your earlobes will droop...  
You will have become your costume...  
your reputation discolored by one too many  
two-nightstands...  
Little matter, I will continue to kick your butt in chess...  
and serve you bowls of my too-hot soup...  
and read aloud to you my ho-hum poems...  
and carry you... in the fall... to the river...  
so you can see the Canada geese flying home...

116

*Who in her long melancholy search for her missing children  
found... another orphan.*

- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*

You tag lines from Tracy Chapman's *Fast Car*...  
for redirects...  
Your memory not jogged by words...  
Your midnight rides... insufficient...  
A time and a place... for everything, yes?...  
For us?...  
You've been known to bend over backwards  
to accommodate... loose cannons  
and rainy days and Mondays...  
A role reprised for playback... in the future...  
The forecast old... little to prattle on about  
excepting the exodus of sunbirds...  
Road crew bosses hunched over indecipherables...  
Unwelcomes arrive...  
You decide to engage a psychic  
and will remain, as always, with a houseful of overturned  
books... and optimistic orphans...

117

*Words are few.*

- Samuel Beckett, *A Piece of Monologue*

I underline your words ... capture in charcoal your undulations ...  
Following the path you mapped ... for others ...  
Blindfolded ... on horseback ...  
You draw lost causes and lamentations ... as if nothing ...  
Your bankrupt cereal bowl ... (pause) ...  
Think of the times ... (faces turn down) ...  
Seductrix of organ donors ...  
unending specimens ...  
For next to nothing ... even though a county fair ...  
*The Aesthetics of Japanese Design* ...  
Folding back the corner of the page ...  
*Now look at what you've done!* ...  
Passing you on the way to the subway ...  
Bags of groceries chatting up jaw lines and other such irreconcilables ...  
Meeting for a bite ... the spiraling down ...  
Tailspinning with cadavers, yes? ...  
Ours so meager ... yet ...

118

*Why do you ... jingle your bracelets in mere idle sport?*

- Rabindranath Tagore, *The Gardener*

Peterpanitis ... in a path-oh-logical game ...  
of give and take ... a game ... of thrones ...  
Demanding ... with pout ... that he/she  
play a role ... in the latest installment ...  
the latest catch-as-catch-can ...  
with you again as always on top ... in control ...  
*Why should 'they' have all the fun? ...*  
Balking ... becoming discombobulated ...  
becoming obsessed with the riddle of opposites ...  
with the out-of-sorts attractions ...  
with the mirror image of requests ...  
tagged in Facebook's trailer park ...  
*Is this why the past is still here? ...*  
*Why they couldn't put Humpty together again? ...*  
Something about being frozen ...



in time? ... in chain mail? ...  
The emptiness of the final analysis ...  
You expose more than your hand, then wonder? ...  
Then tally onlookers ... counting birthstones sparkling  
in the afterglow of your wake ... as unconvincing as ...

119

The laundry day has moved out-of-state  
leaving you with unanswered emails ... and impossible  
dreams ...

Insinuations aside, there will be crossings ...  
and crossovers ... and crosstrainers ...  
and crossdressers ...

Yesterday wants to return  
and you agree to the changes ... in decor ...

Your hand was played out  
in the chorus line at the bar ...

Your lips - full and optimistic -  
were perfectly synced  
with the inoffensive tap selections  
and low-cal menu ...

Your voice has suggested a boxed set of  
anachronisms ... to go ...  
with your neon pink Lycra shorts and tank top ...

Do you still love what you loved? ...

Do you still stalk the fast forward? ...

If you were to again read these lines  
would you be able to disregard the blank pages ...  
the blank stares? ...

Why do you insist on parsing recycled sentences  
when the moments are few  
and the stargazers have zipped up their hoodies  
for an overnight ...  
an overnight filled with the sadness of gramophones  
and the folding/unfolding of the ocean? ...

120

The street of mannequins awaits your induction ...

a Chaos Theory of ho-hums ... false starts ... blind alleys ...  
Players ... within players ... within players ...  
have paid their dues ... for a peek ... at you ...  
Cinderella of the New ... years of abstinence ... facials ...  
the eroticism of obscure symmetry ...  
Your glass slipper ... on camera ... bagged as evidence ...

121

You played dress-up with expensive lipstick  
at the Acropolis  
pocketing stones from here and there  
climbing the steep stairs to the upper room  
where they had reputedly gathered ...  
Thirteen portraits of doormats ...  
*Is it a doormat or a painting of a doormat? ...*  
You grew tired of playing a doormat ...  
And smeared lipstick - à la Heath Ledger - to make yourself  
unfathomable ...  
From moment to moment ... to evidentiary moment ...  
The steep stairs to the next of seven levels ...  
Preparing for the audition ... assuming a wilted position ...  
Your livingness eclipsing the precariousness  
of happiness ...  
I needed to go to CVS to pick up a prescription ...  
The parking lot at the Acropolis was full ...  
I was turned away ...  
The nightmare gaining momentum ...  
Stopped and strip-searched for stones ... at McDonald's ...  
Smearing lipstick ... on Ronald's autographed portrait ...  
I'm not the only one here not making any sense ...  
You too have seen it in the cards she laid out  
with the precision of a diamond cutter ...

122

*Who are we, if not ... an inventory of objects?*  
- Italo Calvino

The high rent aisles in the supermarket ...

abuzz with coupons  
and other short-term investment loopholes ...  
The he saids and the she saids  
streaming along Netflix ... going at it tooth and nail  
with nary a shopping cart between them ...  
comparing metrics ...  
for love and hate ... love and sex ... sex and hate ...  
May I say you look absolutely redemptive ...  
I'll bet it cost an arm and a leg ...  
You have lubricated the valve trombone's splutterings  
and examined - up close and personal -  
the cash-flow (charts) ...  
You are well on your way to Utopia ...  
despite your fascination with cheat sheets ... and washed-up  
unicorns ...  
Of course, there's just so much you can absorb  
as the drama continues to unfold  
in the small upstate New York hamlet  
of your choice ...  
So too you ...

123

*The wind no longer billowed in her garments.*  
- Marcel Proust, *In Search of Lost Time*

The attraction replaced by ennui ...  
This of course Proust's narrator ...  
Begin your analysis of Albertine with *possession equals*  
*erasure* ...  
Follow it through flashbacks to a short story ...  
then to yesterday ...  
*Pout eclipsed by exoticism* ...  
The scene opens with the fourth of seven levels ...  
At a table ... in a restaurant ...  
*I'm all ears!* ...  
I retreat to the script  
but the evidence is foreplay ...  
Stage left with shadows of your former self  
in the passing lane on the Bayonne Bridge ...

along one-way streets ... with no looking back ...  
*Is the interest more than casual? ...*  
This is puppetry ... of the highest order, yes? ...  
Again, the ceiling tiles ...  
*But I always made sure I'd enjoy it! ...*  
You have come this far? ...  
We can crack this case ... with further therapy ...  
*Crack this case? ...*  
*Did I say that? ...*  
I will consult with the flowers in the vase ...  
*Oh, yeah! ...*  
Your insistence ... captivating ...  
Again you will be paid for crossing the line ...  
But first the risotto on the plate ... in the restaurant ...  
in the Styrofoam takeaway box ...  
Searching for lost what? ...  
How would you *even* know? ...  
Your *marmishness* cover held ... despite the spandex ...  
at the throwback party of the first part ...  
Entering a makeshift room ... garments billowing ...  
Bangles (with mantra) leading the way ...  
for your erotic other ...

124

And what excuse might that be? ...  
Lollygagging about ... tardiness as a come-on ...  
then *truth or dare* by the pumps ... on camera ...  
I can only say so much ...  
You have pushed the envelope ... ooh la la ...  
And now more is a sepiaprint  
with players arranged in quilted silence ...  
I know you *love* this kind of thing ...  
Especially when *this kind of thing* involves costumes  
and missing pieces  
and the chance to play another's role ...

125

You have mastered the pronunciation of *oui*

and use it with your shell game  
to entice those who have declined residential treatment...  
The eroticism of suppressed meaning is alive and well  
and has mapped your promiscuous bandwidth  
on vacation (again) at the shore ...  
You need more ...  
An enigma that will soon fall out of fashion  
releasing last-minute tweaks ... complete with stilettos ...  
An easy mark ... is headed your way ...  
Of course, the shell game ...

126

You floss judiciously ... worry unwritten reams ...  
his/her intentions ...  
bulky sarchophagi of approach-avoidance ...  
unresolved past(im)perfect hookups ...  
disconnects ... the neon stupidity of texts ...  
and the whole *Tire Warehouse* thing ...  
*Where the fuck is UNSEND? ...*  
Your pontoon takes on water ...  
There will *never* be a better time ...  
OGD muscling in:  
*First you say you do and then you don't ...*  
Voices fade ... and now this residual avatar  
standing next to you in the checkout line  
hitting on you ...  
It's a supermarket moment ... a hit-and-run supermarket  
moment ...

127

The Goodenoughs were good enough ... buffed biceps and  
thighs ...  
Lisped words ... a turn-on ...  
Playing catch-up to your long-stemmed black  
Lycras ...  
scissoring the elliptical ...  
*May I quote your treadmill? ...*  
Eyes lock on a different shore ...

A shore littered with brittle backyards  
and Facebook friends  
unlined...untouched...unknowing...  
Escape routes pumped and GPS'd...  
A leaf-peeper (by happenstance)...  
always in the director's chair...  
the driver's seat...  
the *O Captain! My Captain!*...of the remote...  
guided by lyrical insertion...  
narrative jostling... and Mr. Jack Daniel's...  
high-brow...low-brow...uni-brow...  
The emptiness filled with Red Bull...and alien others...

128

You're having trouble... deciphering your scribbles...  
(this has been happening a lot lately)...  
and you're being creeped-out by this Billy Joel lookalike  
stalking the perimeter of your dreamscape...  
You're thinking about taking a ballet class...  
eye on the clock...  
but worry HIRD (Hip Internal Rotation Deficit)...  
It's one of those things...  
like losing your grip...  
the world becoming dense prose  
the edges of conversations blurring  
the belated departures  
the nonexistent always butting in  
friendships losing their luster  
through overhandling...  
So what about the ceaseless passage of time?...  
Any consolation there?...  
Just asking...  
Were you in the ark with the rest of the lottery winners?...  
The nuts-and-bolts of walking around the block...  
Taking in the flowers and condiments...  
the rhythms of generations  
and the secondary nature of wrenching yourself from  
unwanted others?...

*Last night, while I lay thinking here  
Some Whatifs crawled inside my ear....*

- Shel Silverstein, *Whatif*

*You do too!...the words - with hair toss -  
starboard...  
The player gearing up for the comeback...  
Start the countdown...  
Handing in a stack of keypunched Hollerith cards...  
Waiting for the printout...  
Plotting the Cartesian coordinates  
of sexual odysseys?...  
A scatterplot of encounters?...  
Developing a mathematical model to fit the data?...  
y axis = *attraction*... x axis = *enjoyment*...  
Parsing enjoyment we find... crouching  
in the corner...  
excitement and intensity...  
The higher the attraction... the greater  
the enjoyment...  
One would think, yes?...  
Wait!... What if they're shooting blanks?...  
Intervening variable?...  
Later, you know, the *on the shoulders of giants*  
kind of thing...  
The regression line of best fit...  
For the best fit...  
So size matters, yes?...  
You're kidding, right?...  
OK, lets test it...  
But correlation isn't causation!...  
Please find a tree for me to hide behind...  
I need a reason for my transgressions!...  
Well, maybe I don't!...  
The lost wax process... can we use that?...  
You know... fitting the mold... so to speak...  
Sucking them in... keeping them guessing...  
*What's going to happen?... Will I score?...**

*Who's in charge here, anyway?...*

I am... You know... like Rene:

*I think (I am in charge) therefore I am (in charge)!...*

130

You learn dance steps and are told you are good...

Watching the stillness with the intensity of being out of step...

Zeno's arrow never arriving at its target...

Your life as instances of stillness...

You cannot delete an instant...

Ashbery says time is not linear but concentric...

The players... in sepia... viewed as concentric circles...

Some take you to ice cream parlors

treat you to sundaes...

Others squeeze you into costumes...

Still others stare blankly... shifting  
in your words...

Always on the brink... of involvement...

Testing the questions...

Applying preservative... pre-Facebook albums...

You worry the fine print... the writing  
on the wall...

but go along for the ride... for years...

Then the hiatus...

The traffic signal malfunctioning...

You... speeding through the intersection...

131

Losing track of fiendish departures

you dole out emoticons

to the freshly laundered

sampling the sake and sushi

the dining room reeking restoration hardware...

You are yellow carded...

Fast forward the backups...

I want to review the anonymous donors...

In black and white... it's less distracting...



I was foolish to argue the point  
threatening true happiness with a new coat  
of paint...  
some periwinkle mixed in to soften the tone...  
Easing the players into position...  
Feeding them arugula... and lines...  
Then moving into the final scene...  
The one that shatters the glass ceiling...

132

Position the player  
and begin jealousy...  
Move to the other side of the room...  
Position yourself...  
You will be wordless...  
Watching him/her... from the other side of the room...  
Angle yourself to see yourself in the mirror...  
Begin doing whatever you have to do...  
Which of the seven levels?...  
Do not break your concentration...  
Watching him/her with him/her...  
The momentary loss...  
Leaving... with an article of his/her clothing...

133

If you didn't have so many overdue library books  
on your plate  
you'd be better able to face the day...  
I have a solution!...  
Introspection is offering buybacks...  
You've heard, right?...  
If you wait it out... you'll be able to walk in...  
head held high...  
It's not just architectural mockups, either...  
You feel uncomfortable...  
perfectly understandable...  
If I had to wear that Halloween costume, I'd deep-six my  
journal entries...

Who's to know, anyway? ...  
Besides, who cares? ...  
We all have skeletons ... in our bathtubs ...  
Remember that scene in *Psycho*, with Anthony Perkins  
eating a sandwich? ...  
And Hitch outside ... in profile ... having a smoke? ...

134

I've lost my notes ... the count ... the sound ...  
I'm not so sure anymore that retrieval is a lucrative  
venture ...  
Surely you can make do with fewer crayons ...  
At least in my neck of the woods ...  
You know what they say ...  
Incidentally, the sidewalks have been rolled out  
for the brouhaha ...  
Everyone - well most everyone -  
will be partying on ...  
I hope there's a headcount ...  
It's always easier to pick up where you left off ...  
I've heard you've been sparring with  
*Send in the Clowns*  
when you should be concentrating on walking  
an imaginary line ...  
Don't get carried away by the lyrics ...  
You have all the necessary accoutrements ...  
the lucky trees, the rapidograph, etc ...  
And now we ... in the Cold Lands ...  
are preparing ourselves ...  
Stockpiling rubber bands ... yeah, there you go! ...

135

You as Goth at 7-Eleven ... no lines to memorize ...  
all gesture ... and angularity ...  
tangled in your wiles ...  
The *User Manual's* 18-minute gap ...  
wreaking havoc among the locals  
who lapse into a false pretense

at every convenience store ...  
Bored with board games with bar flies  
you announce 'check' ... with the enthusiasm of an  
afterthought ...  
The room is wired ... you have no idea ...  
You were warned not to make a scene ...  
A megabyte of bluffing tumbles out of the back room ...  
Everyone pretends to be interested ...  
Why? ... I haven't the foggiest ...  
You do remember him, yes? ... and your run as resident  
stalker? ...  
His laugh and smell fueling your incidence ...

136

Something about the texture of our past lives ...  
The imminent imminent ... falling like pollen ...  
You review the rewrite ...  
The spoken word ... going deep ...  
Reconnecting with players from archival footage ...  
A comfort zone ... at first ...  
At one time following-through made sense  
but now ... entrapped in provocation ...  
you're lost ... and not sure why ...  
Your re-entry into the dream makes sense  
if only for the therapeutic touch of others ...  
close ... and not so close ...  
Calling for reservations  
you recognize the voice ... from everywhere ...

137

Wowed by the manhole-man's trifocals ...  
one two three ...  
you bail out before getting in ...  
The bread truck ... at four in the morning ...  
Another in a long line  
of fellow something-or-others ...  
Minor players in a major role ... in a minor drama ...  
Life as shtick, yes? ... Nothing wrong with that ...

Eye-rolling has been shown to help six out of ten cases  
of self-consciousness ... and objectification ...  
regroup ... re-costume ... re-enter ... reenact ...  
The fray is not what they say ...  
Ubiquitous holiday geegaws ...  
If only for a couple of bucks ... to inhale ...  
and breathe the night away ...  
I've been having trouble following  
the instant replays ...  
Please resend the list of character actors ...  
The newspaper headlines jammed down your  
deep throat ...  
You hold your breath ... you hold on ...  
you are about to die ...  
at least according to the news anchor ...  
following past online acquaintances ... and liaisons ...  
*(The physician's assistant will see you now!)* ...  
Trying to find shelter in the storm ...  
that slammed coastal towns ... with unheard of references ...  
Just what do you give at the office? ...

138

I am awakened by a reenactor tinkering with my thoughts ...  
You as reenactor ...  
The world as reenactment ...  
No longer self-conscious ...  
in the diner ... the bookstore ...  
beyond the stand of pine ...  
Where insects are clicking like crazy ...  
I can't name them ...  
You as tenth classical muse  
sucking me in with your unruly ritualism ...  
and bedhead antics ...  
I need to grocery-shop ... but I've forgotten ...  
Farm fresh at the server farm ... is the only way ...  
Send in the memes ...  
The mechanisms of historical reenactment nudge the funny  
bone ...  
The artificial theatricality is mad ...

The enjambments bottleneck...  
The petitioners in the coffee shop morph into pensioners...  
auditioning  
for yet another *Night of the Living Dead*...  
You as teletubby teletubbied  
into the *Twilight Zone*...  
A Rod Serling teletubby is asking you questions inside your  
duffel bag...  
You engorge yourself on duffel blogs... submitted for your  
approval!...  
Your potassium level drops to an unhealthy low...  
You contemplate settling for even less...  
most do, yes?...  
But then... in the nick of time...  
new morphological evidence appears... on your desktop...  
shepherding your icons into the cloud atlas...  
Third and fourth cousins thrice removed  
replace steampunks in the scrum...  
You as steampunk...  
And once again before the bell you realize...  
life is hunky-dory...

139

You have the moyes... so why the cryptic notes?...  
Whenever he/she was blocked...  
Instead of magnification... over-analysis... and such...  
But don't we all trod the boards... day in and day out?...  
Formulating hypotheses... for the inner fortune teller...  
masked... with satin opera-length gloves...  
ready to rock and roll... after catching some shut-eye?...  
I wanted to use a stacked deck...  
The way we played make-believe... your aunt...  
filling us with pie... and pontifications...  
At the swimming hole... surrounded by unknown weeping  
willows...  
not yet understanding the signs and symbols...  
Offshore... the alligators' red eyes...

Let me put it to you this way...  
 There have been several...irksome bastards...  
 who...having filed the necessary paperwork...  
 toyed with the idea of playing the role  
 of sandbox  
 before skeedaddling out of town...  
 A Marshall Dillon lookalike  
 sidelined by a sidewinder  
 wanting to know the whereabouts  
 of the dime-store triplets  
 who had headlined  
 at the cobbled-together theater-in-the-round  
 where you ...always on call...  
 for whatever you are on call for...  
 parroted lines...pocketing necktied alter egos...  
 Reminds me of Ebenezer's partner...

You worry the ineptitude...of surrogate understudies...  
 and have become a quick-study  
 in the Art of Articulation  
 friending one-trick ponies  
 and those decked out in micro-minis  
 with advanced degrees  
 in wainscoting...and winter tire wear...  
 You...at the bus stop...  
 in down toolbelt...and silver stilettos...  
 haggling...with members of the audience...  
 awaiting the free lecture  
 on the etymology of symbiosis...  
 The weather turning nasty  
 you decide to specialize in box lunches  
 for all makes and models...of up-and-comers...  
 filling the air with tidbits...  
 pocketing some...for a late night snack...  
 with him/her...  
 You've managed to elongate time...and wait...

for an opening ...  
where you can study first flakes ... first hand ...

142

You asterisk-out several lines of email ...  
The flip-floppiness and incredulity build ...  
Words collide ...  
Tomorrow arrives as an addendum ...  
OK, share with me your deepest moment ...  
the one that won the stay of execution ...  
the one that periodically slips through  
your bedroom window ...  
that momentary apparition in red  
that settles in for the midnight ride  
kicking your REM sleep to the curb  
while short-circuiting the treasure trove of language  
ransacked and melted down for alumni weekend ...  
You knew about this, yes? ...  
About the first-person shooters on the beta team? ...  
About the disappointing closet-space ... in microcosms? ...  
About the players ... and their parts ...  
delivering lines with the insensitivity of cold pizza ...  
the anchovies engaged in their own  
trance-like deceptions? ...

143

It's as if you were pixillated ... between then and now ...  
Your voracious appetites ... and obsessions ...  
the charm of supersymmetry ...  
To feel wanted in a way that's not abusive ...  
One minute this ... the next that ... and suddenly  
you're aboard a train in Russia's deep winter ...  
I doubt that it could have been avoided ...  
The summer was telling but we weren't listening, were we? ...  
Or maybe we were ... I don't know ...  
Can you imagine the purgatorial whisper of expats? ...  
And the cute little dog-and-pony shows  
in that bedraggled circus? ...

Fueling you with enough esteem to begin the beguine...  
Assuming the position...disproportionately...for  
whomever...  
The inside of the dream...expanding exponentially...  
Nothing was lost...really...  
Dusting yourself off...turning the key...  
And the sudden dumping of six feet of snow...  
Stranding travelers  
to say nothing of transmorgrification...

144

The convolutions though subtle are exasperatingly  
trivial...rather mediocre...  
*He spent his life drilling teeth...*  
Can you imagine the next floor?...  
You shouldn't expect miracles...especially after you've  
consistently refused updates...  
quashing outside solicitations...  
It's a question of overage...and how to deal with it...  
Mastering last-minute tabletop conversions...  
Why allow just anyone?...  
Trying to plot a course pitifully colored with indecision  
especially after finding yourself here  
in the middle of this multitasked mess...  
Pocket a convenient delusion...  
Grab your paintbox...landscapes await...  
The results will induce a trance unlike any other...

145

The up-and-comers came flashdancing unpronounceables...  
Mitigating circumstances?...Posh!...  
You have seen the illusion...and it is us...  
Why now after so many trips to the outer limits?...  
In a flurry of words...  
How often have you stumbled upon the castle  
of disbelief?...  
As in *This is what needs to be done...*  
It was lost upon him/her...lost!...



And now the scene opens with yet another candied apple  
being offered surreptitiously ...  
You're running out of raw material ... and you know it ...  
Look, the air out here is friendly ...  
Backstroke if need be ...  
You'll receive full credit ... from your sponsor ...  
Singing in ways we are not ...  
Trying to stay awake ... through the lugubrious moments ...  
We all have them ...  
Watching the players ... build a new world ... pixel upon  
pixel upon pixel ...  
Wait, back-channel sniping is *verboten* ...  
Before you know it we too will be there ... sooner other than  
that ...  
Ha! ... Isn't it romantic? ...

146

The script fumbled ...  
the waiter brings bread and wine ...  
She says, *I am Uma* ...  
She tap dances with the specials ... rummaging ...  
She sports a black clip-on bowtie and black ballet flats ...  
She is credentialled ...  
You can hear a pin drop ... during lulls ...  
Knowing how things work is somewhat of a relief  
but then scrutiny knocks  
and it's 1st and 10 ...  
Uma asks about HTML5 ...  
Suddenly, a pall appears ...  
several pick lint ... drop back to punt ...  
From moment to moment ... give and take ...  
Your life ... a hashtag ...  
It's not time for softspoken huddles ...  
or reminiscences ...  
He/she remembers you ... and the time(s) ...  
Even when thinking about someone you weren't that crazy  
about ...  
A switch flips ... and there's a rush ...

You embrace easiness for those intuiting the darkness  
that is sure to arrive ... most likely when the bag of chips is  
only half-eaten ...

And to those who smug their arrival  
with dogeared albums  
of yellowing photographs ...  
Past Masters of the Universe ...

Big hair days ...

Days of knights groping pawns ...

You had a knack for racking near hits  
for the inevitability of amusement parks  
and head-turning with single-digit checkmates ...  
It is as it was, yes? ...

How will you get through the rest of your life? ...

A PowerPoint, perhaps? ...

Clucking the brittleness of cluster flies ...  
flipping flopping eavesdropping ... on the sill ...  
Checking your email for holiday doodads ...  
and buy-backs ...

The crows with their tickets ...

the snow beginning ...

You decide to slow down ... again ...

to savor the word ...

to record the footsteps of your favorite writers ...  
blocked ...

Dreaming ... the after-hour dramas in the pen ...

*The season of dancing was endless.*

- Mark Strand, *The Delirium Waltz*

Importunity knocks ... and you know it's him/her ...  
in Spanish boots of Spanish leather  
against December's passing grade  
as if a transit strike struck ... bottleneaking  
neighborhoods ...  
Nothing to fret about ...

bad weather is bad weather...  
Yet... the downhill...  
Your professed unworthiness... preempted by costume...  
iCandy... for victims of Seduction Theory 101...  
Never far from the panopticon of theater...  
Words receding into the artisanal urns lining the walls...  
pinned with pics of nobodies...  
The season of dancing begins...  
The lights are low... the air warm...  
You glide with him/her... across polished wood inlaid marble  
lightsnow shallow water...  
You want to have arrived, yes?...  
Of course you can summon the limo at any time...  
or thereabouts...

149

Your uniformed erotic other conjugates verbs  
for flower handlers... and Rockaday Johnnies...  
after hours... on the desktop...  
waterlogged... gasping for breath...  
thinking it cool... by the metric of then...  
The streets fill with Ferraris... and other *aspirazioni*...  
Lying casually... long windswept arms  
welcome rough liaisons...  
the clock insisting on a face...  
You are sized-up... for Paris... or Rome...  
or wherever... but instead hookup  
with the Goodenoughs  
in a trailer park outside Atlantic City  
harvesting cartwheels... for pocket change...  
and lonesome grins...  
your gymnastics occasioning motion sickness...  
The weather eventually arrives... with a show of hands...  
breaking off the lush... to explore  
another aspect... of your to-die-for glamour  
asleep with excitement...  
The schoolmarm's hourglass... pouting with bittersweets...

You toggle between you and you ... and you ... and you ...  
 between now and then ...  
 between couch and cutting room floor ...  
 between window ... and door ...  
 The HOT button dumping reams of words ...  
 Mounds of insignificance ...  
 Dancing on the edge of dreams ...  
 What else can one do? ...  
 When all we have is language ...  
 That's it ... nothing else ... in a bell jar, yes? ...  
 The voice distant ...  
 connecting ... disconnecting ... connecting  
 again ...  
 You ... walking across a field ... of ficus trees ...  
 Every step ... a new step ...  
 Handlers ... as sound designers ...  
 Falling off the wagon ... climbing back on ...  
 It's crowded out here ... in the waiting room ...  
 The therapist suggests a monologue  
 as a ficus tree ...  
 Just what the PA ordered, yes? ...  
 Not sure what that's all about ...  
 Kind of like a call-and-response ...  
 You call ... but there's no reply ...  
 Now what? ...  
 Do you call again ... or pack it in? ...  
 The camera zooms in on a clock ...  
 The clock's hands are trying to grab something ...  
 Anything ...  
 The camera pans a crowd ...  
 They're waiting to see what you're going to do ...  
 Oddsmakers are giving odds ...  
 A few hookers are giving head ...  
 You decide to re-sing the lyrics  
 to (what you hope will be) your next big hit ...  
 Tweeting your whereabouts to dispassionate third parties ...  
 It's all scenery ...

No it's not! ... He/she said it's all theater! ...  
Ah ha! ... Please have him/her contact me! ...

151

The cereal box opens with a soft shoe ...  
Interrogators again trying to map your profile ...  
to make sense ... of your odyssey ...  
The syllabus for your canon ... cryptic ...  
You highlight ... the (pen)ultimatum ...  
in red yellow blue ...  
and get stuck on the words s-p-o-o-l  
as the elements of a Rough Guide  
skitter out of earshot ...  
Pics of players ... squeeze into the Cloud ...  
tracked by the trance music  
you have come to be identified with ...  
You decide to put it all down ... in a book  
inspired and intimidated  
by the masters of your art ...  
the masturbators of your art ...  
staring down at you from their place on the wall ...  
If only you had the wordmagic of a Patti Smith ...

152

Fact checkers check your facts  
riffling through your backpack  
for dark chocolate ... and other antioxidants ...  
Instead of the usual ... you order the special ...  
Flipping through a Lands' End catalog ...  
You notice them at the race checking you out ...  
Lycras have a way of doing that ...  
The supermarket opens its doors  
with free courses for seniors ...  
Perhaps *Interpersonal Dynamics of the 1200s*  
holds the key ...  
Fictionalizing ... but not storytelling ...  
A giant diya gation, yes? ...

Watching trailers on Netflix...subtitled...  
It's always good to be packed and ready...

153

Your sequined angularities at a time like this ...  
A time when sidewalks ... can lead you astray...  
can compel you to tweak your memories ...  
your incidentals ...  
They make me want to re-script my dreams  
and join the picture-perfect crowd ... for drinks ...  
Sometimes it's like that ...  
Quite frankly, yes? ...  
Not to be confused with the truth of the matter ...  
Now what? ... A new view? ... A new you? ...  
Always the gamble following the initial ice-break ...  
We'd like to blame it on the snowstorm, yes? ...  
Images ... flooding in ...  
There's only so much your finger in the dike  
can hold back ...  
At this stage ... anyway ...  
And then ... the tabloids arrive with payback time ...  
And a delivery boy/girl demanding a tip ...

154

Your inner stand-up comic insists he/she never  
blacked out ...  
Always delivered lines ... impeccably ...  
I am sure about who I did what with ...  
Is that who ... or whom? ...  
Trawling for the Big One (or the almost Big One) ...  
*Earth Angel Earth Angel ... will you be mine? ...*  
Sanding down the bedposts ... again ... trashed ...  
That we all could be so perfect ...  
Segue to you ... texting the Greek chorus ...  
I'm unclear about one spot only, your Honor ...  
Certain follow-throughs were off-limits, of course ...  
at the funeral ... the wedding ... the arraignment ...  
Can't you see I'm costumed as Aphrodite? ...

Walking in...delivering lines...cold...  
They were marionettes...all of them...  
Eager as altar boys...Wouldn't you be?...  
I reversed the roles...set the pace...  
faster...slower...  
You tell me...I'll tell you, yes?...  
Eyes wide...cued the 12 steps...Ready Set Go!...  
All episodes...Now streaming!...  
Why is Popeye here?...  
And why is he having second thoughts about  
Olive Oyl?...

155

*Spooooo!*

- Samuel Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*

Spool!...Spool!...Spooooo!...Spooooo!...  
Miles's *Blue In Green*...  
*There are no mistakes!*...  
Spool!...  
The evidentiary moment...  
Assemble the players...and the accoutrements...  
Life as analogy...as oxymoron...mishap...  
Spooooo!...  
Re-position the pieces...please!...  
Attempt a recap...a remix...  
But I want this!...  
I am ready for this!...  
The tutoring...over!...  
The hand-holding...over!  
The hiatus...over!...  
In the starting blocks!...  
Ready!...Set!...  
Yes!...Yes!...Yes!...  
This!...Now!...  
Tweeting the hell out of insignificants...  
Spool!...Spool!...Spooooo!...  
What...spool?...  
The Age of the Mac...upon us!...

Grocery shopping ... at best ...  
I am so into Amazon Samples! ...  
and haute cuisine ...  
There will be ... then ...  
And you will have flashbacks ... setbacks ...  
They will bludgeon you ... Knock you from sleep ...  
Force you to follow ...  
No darkness ... Spooooo! ...

156

Flirting ... again ... with the outer limits ...  
With movements ... gestures ... monodramatics ...  
Pics ... of you ... 10, 20 years ago ...  
unabashedly autobiographical ...  
the too-clumsily-explicit sections excised ...  
leaving nothing but self-translations ...  
Notwithstanding ...  
Sucked in by the makeover ...  
By the that was then ... this is now ...  
Such unironic enthusiasms ...  
Never again ...  
I have come undone  
and escaped through a hidden panel in the  
refrigerator ...  
Beating yourself up? ...  
You were you ... wrestling with demons ...  
who ... out of habit ... made the donuts ...  
and the *parlez-vous français?* ...  
and the midnight rides ... to all the wrong places ...  
Defacing profiles with neon pink spray paint ...  
and misquotes ... from overdue library books ...

157

Your usual definition of fun jumped bail ...  
Out the window ...  
Now what? ...  
Now you're re-arranging polar opposites? ...  
Mis-labeling intentions? ...



Insisting on misrepresentations ... mis-translations? ...  
What about sandwich money? ...  
Entering the day ... cold ... then colder ...  
OK, we can do this! ...  
It's not so bad ... Not bad at all in fact ...  
Ha! ... once yoga class is behind us ...  
On a clear day ...  
But it's not a clear day! ...  
Just assume the position ... and don't let on ...

158

The new epoch began a few minutes ago  
without ... Buy One ... Get One ...  
without fanfare figuration or abstraction ...  
(as if those elements have something to do with it!) ...  
I too have felt the persistent drama ... of stalemate ...  
the appropriation and embellishment  
of both open and closed mics  
though I find it hard to imagine  
each of us with a common core ...  
Never forget the sodium levels of lame ducks ...  
They preceded us ... and unrecognized  
they could blow clear through the roof ...  
He/she is running out the door ... in summer pants ...  
Can you believe the aimless ceremony? ...  
The disproportionate translation? ...  
The squalor ... marvelous ... yet form-fitting ...  
inciting a melee among those in transition? ...

159

*I was not in the mood for visitors.*

- Andre Breton

Alone, I think of cloud cover  
and the state of affairs  
that took possession of you late last night  
forcing you into a '70's mood ring  
trampled by the exoticism of time and place ...

I always try to gather myself, yes? ...  
and last night was no exception ...  
You could have at least cleared the air ...  
opened up, so to speak ...  
but instead ... you got behind the wheel ...  
and drove away ... into a summer day ...  
while coffee tables sighed  
under pics of manspreads ... and failed hustlers ...  
Playing visiting nurse ... cold turkey ...  
wiping the hours clean ...  
your muse grabbing a ride from the party  
of the first part  
when relinquished opportunists  
flooded the anti-chamber  
bottlenecking egress for visitors who wouldn't listen  
and drove you bananas ... with their *could care less* ...

160

But there's an untidiness to it ...  
A seductive untidiness ...  
An untidiness that can spellbind ...  
As in green ... the fugitive and unstable pigment ...  
If the green's good ... it's all good ...  
all pigments ... on copper ... especially ...  
Taking notes ... in invisible ink ...  
Handing in assignments ... in invisible ink ...  
Hanging upside down ... for extra credit ...  
demonstrating the latest  
in roundabouts ... in cardiac care ...  
the dilemma continuing  
through railroad crossings ... checkout counters ...  
heavy metal detectors ...  
streets of suspended sentences ...  
A three-ring circus ... a one-ring circus ...  
a private session ... with you ... bows in your hair ...  
as resident sword swallower ...  
Tracking the progress of (dis)cards ...  
The nitty-grittiness ... and all that jazz ...  
The hills alive with sublime iterations

of your (dance) routine ...

And you ... through the eye of a needle ... fingered ... in the  
three R's ... comparing nursery rhymes ... to-do lists ...

Fancying ourselves special ... if for no other reason ...

161

You tweaked streets signs ... then pulled up stakes  
with no forwarding address ...

And now it's your turn to shave ...

Your turn to become an A B C D ... F student ...

a Playboy (Bunny) of the Western World ...

long in the tooth ...

mis-directing traffic ... down one-way streets ...

littered ... with black and white

round-screen Stromberg-Carlsons ... from the '50s ...

retrofitted for Netflix ... and Once Upon a (Prime) Time ...

You were hyperaware of incidental music ...

A pro in the confessional ...

The plot may not even be fully summerizable ...

162

A fatuous day ... A feet-on-dash kind of day  
smacking of meta ...

This is happening ... and this is happening  
about happening ...

And you ... again ... engaging and animated ...

They flocked to the watering hole

pining for the way things used to be ...

I wanted to pontificate about something ...  
about anything ...

but there were signs all around

spelling out appropriate behavior

competing with signs for administering the Heimlich ...

*We interrupt this screen dump for the following  
PSA ...*

*Of the 12,982 forensic autopsies performed*

*between 1947 and 1988  
78 cases of café coronary  
due to bolus impaction in the larynx  
(bolus death) were reported  
[www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1424826](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1424826)...*

You never know ... You just never know ...  
You collected empties (not new)  
and compared paint chips (new)  
rarely returning before 4 AM  
to your monkishly regimented life ... in the exurbs ...  
Few got past second base ... despite your prancing  
around the dugout ... in a short puffy uniform ...  
Since back then it was all about you  
as comptroller, yes? ...

163

*I understood that I was wasting time that would never  
return, that I was losing hours that could have been  
beautiful.*

- Alexandra David-Neel

You reinsert pronouns into your stories within stories  
because they welcome a seductive angularity ...  
the intricacies of intimacy ...  
of running into him/her  
in a parking lot ... in the next town over ...  
You're happy that he/she is happy  
(and you're pretty sure  
you're being honest with yourself) ...  
Memories flood the five minutes  
both of you blue-penciling the script  
both sides of the menu vying for your attention ...  
Not interested in the specials? ...  
Ghosts of living friends as character witnesses ...  
In another place ... another time ... there would be ...  
There would be what? ... Unanswerables? ...  
Unfair! ... and unnecessary! ...  
You have wasted enough time ...

polishing the stones ... of the New Year ...  
Move on to the next item on your to-do list ...  
Perhaps you should retrieve dry eyes from the dumpster ...  
examine them for their provenance ...  
their classic lines ...  
their beautiful unexpectedness? ...

164

*A thin arm makes a face sadder.*

- Anne Carson, *Short Talks*

All subsequent failures/features  
will be given the benefit of the doubt ...  
re-examined for negligence ...  
sort of ...  
and encouraged to resubmit ...  
It's the paperwork that's work ...  
Pressed into service ... by whom? ...  
Did you really think  
you could/would get away  
with it? ...  
Many of the dead  
walking behind us  
are victims of love ...  
Too many are chomping at the bit ...  
Worrying aloneness ... as a talisman ...  
In abeyance ...  
Of course? ... he/she said ... eventually ...  
Relishing the idea of thick skin ...  
of thin skin ...  
of second skin ...  
of skin ...  
And this too with little regard for the moment ...  
Doesn't it seem advantageous to be left  
high and dry? ...  
To be left ... on your own ...  
I mean the matter at hand, yes? ...  
To be fascinated by frontispieces ... as it were ...  
and makeshift shelters which ... who knows ...

could hold the key ...  
He/she has put out feelers ...  
working on his/her profile late into the night  
with several chiming in  
after the (Greek) chorus ... had eaten their fill  
and packed it in ...  
The importance of someone to yearn for ...  
to pine after ...  
To lean on ...  
*Lean on me when you're not strong ...*  
*And I'll be your friend, I'll help you carry on ...*  
The first geisha were men, yes? ...  
jesters, entertainers ... talk show hosts ...  
life coaches ...  
My head spins ... with images of gambits ...  
A red Cobra ... with you ...  
in transit ...  
in hot pink costume ... zippered no less! ...  
in control ...  
in charge ...  
in and out ...  
in touch ... (as in I'll be) ...  
in the moment ...  
in as far as I can go ...  
in too deep ...  
in ... terruptus ...  
The finds at archaeological digs  
have led many astray  
and continue to do so each and every day ...

165

*It matters if you want it to matter.*

- Maxine Kumin

But what about contextual heft? ...  
Words corralled from undergraduate syllabi? ...  
Cashing in before stepping out  
or stepping on  
or stepping over ...

Always the problem of irrevocability ...  
Of crossing the bridge ...

For work? ... Pegged pants and cable knitsweaters ...

Act 2 Scene 1 ... In the red Cobra ...

*My height intimidates players ...*

*They love it! ...*

*Especially after googling wine lists ... as if ...*

*Always the same sluggish words ...*

*Where are you from? ... What do you do? ...*

*blah blah blah ...*

*I traffic in consumables ...*

*Packaged as in ... As You Like It ...*

*I hold the aces ...*

*Control the scene ...*

*Flip the roles ...*

*But always ... Far from the Madding Crowd ...*

*I never anticipate having to count ceiling tiles ...*

*I make the most of a (sometimes) pathetic situation ...*

*Ready or not, here I come ... Yeah! ...*

The food networks ... among others ... want in ...

As was Sappho's choice on Lesbos ...

And now? ... All accounting? ... Retrospective ...

Appropriated and - ideally seamlessly - embellished ...

*Take me in ...*

*Feed me ...*

*What big lips you have ...*

*All the better ...*

166

Reading between the lines to new ways of listening ...

Curatorial duties aside ...

Who knows? ... You could be next ...

With those ramifications ...

Snowshoeing? ... On a shoestring? ...

*Into Great Silence?*... To hear what you see ...  
Pirating conversations with yourself ... with others ...  
then doing a one-eighty and returning to your yurt  
far from the insistent irrelevancies  
of ubiquitous machines ...  
Say again? ...  
Several are impressed by the way you handle intrusions ...  
*Wild nights - wild nights!*... *Were I with thee* ...  
Not that you couldn't shine ... if pressed ...  
Have you read the latest doggerel per whomever? ...

167

The unmooring ... abandoning the original phrasing ...  
losing the delightful peculiarities of playing rubato  
as if the subtext from Bergman's  
*Scenes from a Marriage*  
had made its dispassionate way  
through cyberspace ... into your inbox ...  
You are between scenes ... between roles ...  
between lovers ... between ...  
an exemplar of elan ... of sweetening the stakes ...  
which more often than not play out in your favor  
as the lights of time quench the sky  
with the warm repetition of place ...  
The motion to open has been ignored  
or misplaced ... whichever ...  
the redundancy resurfacing ... reassuringly ...  
as votaries engage an infinite loop ...

168

You take a number and stare at the meats in the deli case ...  
You have survived another trip to Neyerland  
where incomplete sentences are diagrammed in full view  
and pieces of jigsaw cavort to exhaustion ...  
Oblivion changes color ... again ...  
You are tempted to phone a friend ...  
The deficits of seduction stare you down ...  
Not since ... you can't remember ...



An RV goes by...brimming...with circus performers  
from your old neighborhood...  
friends who spent far too many nights  
brushing with whiteners...while asking ATMs...  
over and over... *How do I look?...*  
Could it have been any other way?...  
Review...again...your options...on the drop-down menu...  
the ones not grayed-out...  
The caged bird sings off-key  
dreams of coloring outside the line  
lip-syncs Pulitzer'd composer John Luther Adams's  
*In the White Silence...*  
You begin to fog from Abilify  
when images of your analyst texting  
while you spill your guts...slap you back...  
A session *In the Night Kitchen* would upend  
his redacted ass...

169

You fill your notebook...with admonitions...  
not bothering to correct misspellings...

170

You like to start the day...with your own coffee  
in your own cup  
despite the distress of your heels  
on the sidewalk...at four AM...

You never stay the night...  
*What would you talk about in the morning?...*  
You're speaking in a rumor of pentameter  
as Dante's *Francesca*...

You have stepped outside for a smoke...taking notes...  
codifying liaisons...(You're tempted to tweet  
but there's no cell service down here)...  
The thought of beauty provokes rhetorical escalation...

but the winds in the Second Circle  
make it impossible to interview Phlegyas  
who has taken on the role of tour guide  
as if on a London double-decker...

*What's with the coins in the passengers' mouths? ...  
Doesn't this boat have autopilot? ...  
And why is it so damn hot? ... I could use a drink! ...  
Where's the waiter? ... The service here sucks! ...*

Your husband's brother, yes? ...  
Ten years, yes? ...  
And now? ... the game over ... the word out ...  
banished ... forever ... to this maelstrom ...

How often did you *sillify* encounters ... dismantling  
the false sincerity with jelly dripping from your lips? ...  
How often ... in your excitement ...  
did you drop the hardcover into the bathwater? ...

171

The gaming tables open with rhetorical questions  
and you ... dressed for the roll ...  
insist on the provocativeness of Polaroids ...

There is always something else ...  
always something cutting into the rapprochement ...  
always something that needs to be done ... or should be ...

Building an argument for change, for example ...  
Your pins reflecting wanderlust ... as if you  
have been waiting all your life for the barbarians ...

You tally moments ... archiving appropriations ...  
with an eye toward sitcoms ...  
Off camera, you worry perspective ... and momentum ...

This is not the first time ... or the last ...

Taking what's happening now...  
and imagining what would happen if it kept happening...

172

Never use the definite article... with me... she said...  
It was then that I realized I was wearing a tie... and  
fiddling with it... fiddling with it... fiddling with it...

173

*Riding the buses was like being trapped in a Samuel Beckett  
play.*

- Lance Austin Olsen

As if these award-winning vignettes informed your life...  
The steps to... and from...  
Your life as hypertext markup... with sidebars  
for family... and friends...  
*La familia de Cecilia*... remember that?...  
from freshman lab...  
Recording five piano suites  
commemorating imaginary events... in your life...  
Isn't this what matters?...  
Little consensus here... As expected?...  
A knock on the door... the scene begins  
with widescreen guitar rock...  
Field recordings... and why not?...  
Improvising on the script... always a trip...  
and he/she knows it...

174

You have sped through intersections  
and gotten away with butter  
in a surprising conjunction of opposites...  
When was the last time you checked your email  
for walk-ins... interlopers...  
and other borderline personalities?...  
In absentia... can be fun...

and you will have enough time ... this time ...  
to complete the assignment...  
should you choose to do so...  
and... it would behoove you to do so...  
The intimacy of the bubbles  
slipping out of Jobs's dent in the universe  
is good... and wishful...  
We should be happy... and we are...  
despite the bloodshot eyes of time  
which never close...  
Your therapist has been briefed  
to see or not to see... which meds... do the trick...  
the trick... not unlike priming yourself  
by scanning lines  
from a few of your favorite reads...  
I myself will go with the aftershock...  
of discovering misspellings in ATMs...

175

With you... glittery gowned... examining the aftermath...  
afraid that too much happened... too soon...  
A plate of spaghetti forgotten...  
Your lush life reflected... in too many mirrors...  
Before you know it... you are recast as an opportunist...  
or an optimist... which is it?...  
who will do anything to curry favor  
for a dime bag... of antioxidants...  
You sleep in the spare room... within its sparseness...  
within its untrammelled willingness to accommodate...  
within its DSM-5 single axis assessments...  
to say nothing of its outlandish vistas...  
There are voices in the walls of the spare room  
narrating the pixels of your unexamined life...  
dealing anecdotes on the sullen streets of your city...  
You feature countless times  
and appear... a moment too soon...  
on several occasions...  
Little of import happens  
until the players... with their parts...

enter the spare room  
relinquishing their passed-over lives  
all spiffed-up, of course ... just like in the good old days  
when spare rooms made for exaggerated expressions  
by players escorted therein ... following the dotted line  
of the body's shadowy escarpments  
and where by chance ... and only then ...  
would the truth of the matter rear its head ...  
Three sheets to the wind ... again ... and again ...

176

You ride out superfluous comments  
passing a room of garrulous mannequins  
whose painted-on eyes ... prevent you from doing  
the right/wrong (circle one) thing ...  
The times change ... elsewhere ...  
You worry the consternation of some ...  
after consulting a dictionary ...  
feeling energized by alphabets ... near and far ...  
especially those for multiple platforms ...  
Its time for the future ...  
You are thankful you have done your homework  
and smitten with the thought of more ...  
But then you learn there is something deeper ...  
something hiding in the shallows ...  
a deeper consideration ...  
appropriating words ... willy-nilly ...  
from award-winning crossword puzzles ...  
This is only the beginning ...

177

Intrigued by the fetishism of bending the air  
emigrants from the edgelands  
carefully toe the deep end of the pool (hall) ...  
A mathematical reluctance ...  
a devil-may-care attitude ...  
now that pretty much anything can be undone ...  
The unofficial countryside ...

of patterns ... and proofs ... and gaps ...  
The lost encores swelling the scene  
populated with players on the edge of your memory ...  
Your finger on undo ... just in case ...

178

*If there was no term for something, it might be thought  
that the commodity is of small importance.*

- Donald Richie, *A Treatise on Japanese Aesthetics*

Pocketing onomatopoeias ... or onomatopoeiae (either) ...  
The line from here to there ... from me to you ...  
With you leaning out ... and bookmakers - especially -  
leaning in ...  
Celebrating life's fine-tooth combs ...  
A time and a place for that too ...  
What if you were called to provide expert testimony  
on this or that? ...  
Could you ... at a moment's notice  
pick up where you left off? ...  
And now ... the day done ... Can you imagine? ...

179

Parking a silver Bentley Mulsanne in your back pocket  
with miles to go before you sleep ...  
the sleep of innocents ...  
picking through a bin at the corner candy store ...  
your finger in the pages of Murakami's *Strange Library* ...  
even more hushed than usual ...  
You have videotaped hours of makeovers  
and found yourself nights in the editing room  
with frosting on your doctored nose  
pockets bulging with parking tickets  
posing as Lottery tickets ...  
By the way, your iPhone called in sick ...  
The times? ... They are indeed a-changing ...  
It's not so much do this ... do that ...  
It's something else ...

A new do, perhaps ...  
A reworked scene ...  
Whatever it is ... will be massaged ...  
like the donor's heart  
to answer the questions that have been airdropped  
and to be corrected analyzed blue-penciled  
and returned ... for revision ... later ... in the month ...

180

Apparently someone else made it all the way through  
and tried on the vernacular ...  
You've seen these parlor tricks before ...  
We all have ... last year ... in fact ...  
So lets do them again ... and get really ho-hummed ...  
Always good to go to the white board, yes? ...  
Re-up (as they say) ... and get pumped ...  
You're only as good as? ... Really? ...  
Is that it? ... Well ... I'm OK ... if you're OK ...  
Even if you're not OK ... OK? ...  
Watch out for sedentary recluses crossing  
against the light ...  
Make it happen ... and look what happened ...  
Approximations of the examined life  
but with a generous retirement package  
drop-kicked from the 10th yard line ...  
And please don't forget to enter the drawing  
for Opera Maven of the Year  
streamed ... every hour on the half ...

181

Opulence? ... Forget it ... that was yesterday ...  
or the day before ...  
Today ... we're all about collaboration ...  
How not to drop the ball ... if it's ever handed to you ...  
And of course the enigma of pupillary response  
to collaboration ... Channeling the undiscovered beauty  
of pupillary response ...  
When necessary ...

OK, lets play this: you're at the gym... on the elliptical...  
The trainer-in-training is circling the room...  
You worry exposure  
but intrigued by the idea of collaboration...  
How much to pump? ...  
What angle is best for maximum burn? ...  
Open your McGuffey to page 7 *The Maniac*...  
You mean like Jennifer Beals in *Flashdance*?...  
No! No! No! ... Not that! ...  
Our bodies intersect at the circumcenter of the triangle  
whether we like it or not...  
*Back to back, belly to belly,*  
*I don't give a damn,*  
*I done dead already...*  
But lets not go there just yet...  
Today, it's collaboration, remember? ...  
c-o-l-l-a-b-o-r-a-t-i-o-n...  
Someone requested input, yes? ... Make it new, yes? ...  
This is the scary part...  
Like Bela descending the staircase, saying ...  
*Listen to them*  
*Children of the night*  
*What music they make...*  
And Renfield ... sated on flies ... ever the realtor ...  
Focus on the feet ... as if you were back in your basement  
studio...  
Cranking out canvas after canvas...  
Which, by the way, I really liked...  
Decades pass ... bridges are burned...  
Dylan thanks many ... and spears the critics at MusiCares ...

*Come gather 'round friends*  
*And I'll tell you a tale*  
*Of when the red iron pits ran empty*  
*But the cardboard filled windows*  
*And old men on the benches*  
*Tell you now that the whole town is empty.\**

Suspend disbelief, take something



for your *Shock of the New*...

A magnificent series and book by Robert Hughes ...  
which incidentally I picked up for a song ...  
in a minimart ... where the Marx Brothers featured ...  
and many of us boarded the ship of shtick ...  
some neyer to return ...

You, however, lived as you always did ...  
Rewriting scripts to fill the bill ...  
Happenstance interyened ... and led you away ... or astray ...  
Following nature's headlights ... Not a bad thing, yes? ...

\*Bob Dylan's *North Country Blues*

182

*I can't watch the sea for a long time or what's happening on  
land doesn't interest me anymore.*

- Monica Vitti

Forget as well the alchemy of your zipcode ...  
A good idea ... but not scalable ... by any stretch ...  
Besides, there's nothing there ...  
nothing more than the placement of two objects  
next to one another  
filling pages (?) with stars ... underlines ... dog-ears ...  
The talk ... outside yourself ... is good ...  
Stepping over the rambunctiousness of words ...  
Releasing the binders ... before it's too late ...  
Before the chopping block ...  
Before the cue ... for the final scene ...  
These borderline personality mockups have taken  
their toll ...  
Despite all, they'll do what they damn well please ...  
dining so to speak with Nero  
in his rotating banquet room ...  
Pandemonium? ... You bet! ...  
You've seen this coming, yes? ...  
in the moments before you left ...  
hands full of condiments ... and compliments ... trashed ...

*... the absolute inanity of calling anything a fictional essay.*

- Anne Carson

You talk at length with Keats ...  
 You ask about his words ... which you want to believe  
 were written in rooms with high ceilings ...  
 You ask him to look at what you're working on ...  
 He says he will ... but then runs out of time ...  
 There is no way back ...  
 You worry the final exam ...  
 Later you are able to define infidelity  
 to your satisfaction ... though it isn't ...  
 Strange how quickly the principled departs  
 and leaves you in the middle of a busy intersection ...  
 sans clothes ...  
 Have you forgotten to call the plumber about the leaky  
 faucet? ...  
 I thought so ...  
 The voice of God sounds human, yes? ...  
 It's nothing ... just the reluctance to admit the fool ...  
 And your obsessions? ... Are they reality? ...  
 Shouldn't they be? ...  
 If the problem is systemic ...  
 Yes! Yes! I know ...  
 But then when was the line actually crossed? ...  
 You mean crossed so that we both knew? ...  
 Your words float downstream ... farther and farther ...

You wore matching thunderstorms to your latest audition  
 and delivered lines from Machiavelli ...  
 Sorry for what you consider discourtesy ...  
 I tried to keep everyone informed ...  
 It was my idea last year ... So I figured I would take  
 responsibility for doing it this year ...

And so...

Moviegoers will again be fed reruns  
and remain confused  
between mouthfuls of buttery popcorn...

Retreating with your boxed set  
of heirloom purple amulets ...  
You're good to go ...  
Rewinding the misreading ...  
Its pulsations - 12 a minute - match your breathing ...

Duct tape adorns the wobbly diorama  
carried aloft by a bevy of bees ...  
The flight plan ... mimicking Daedalus's  
seduces Icarus to rise ...

Later...

Mid-afternoon ... snowshoeing the whiteness ...  
There will be no pussyfooting  
or double-entendres ... however enviable ...  
Your sincerity ... the space between parentheses ...

Did I, like you, miss something? ... Yes, Virginia, ...  
the new is too new ... for some ...  
High-flying Major Bowes and Ted Mack ...  
Have you taken your vitamin C? ... and your selfie? ...

185

There are only so many ways one can connect ...  
So many ways to document the emotional upheavals of  
passing ...  
You'd think the alternative would abide ...  
But then you check their footwear ... and you know ...  
Searching for the perfect ramen can be like that ...  
You know enough ... after a while ... to drop it ...  
Drop it onto the collection plate ...

If only parenthood could be planned with as much finesse ...  
The effort to ward off the delusional is, in a word,  
Triumphant! ...  
It would seem only logical, yes? ...  
I mean ... the multifaceted ... and all that ...  
By the time you get to Phoenix ...  
The phoenix will have risen ... above the quay ...  
and steel mills ...  
with you left holding a charred, autographed copy  
of the program for the current year ...

186

It all seems derivative ... every last element ...  
Theater-of-the-absurd derivative ...  
Drama of exposure derivative ...  
Standing-on-the-shoulders-of-giants derivative ...  
Not all bad, yes? ...  
A matter-of-factness ... a cultural moment ...  
in which self-display  
fronts for fear of self-disclosure  
or revelation ...  
Like you've gotta watch everything you say  
and even then ... you're sure to get nailed ...  
The buzz in condiment aisles ...  
Your head stuck in a graphic comic  
featuring your avatar ... gussied-up no less ...  
Can you imagine the itchiness ...  
as you crumple the note tossed into your car window  
while you waited at the crosstalk? ...  
What did it say? ...  
And now you're back in your room  
blanketed up to your eyeballs  
waiting for your surrogate someone ... to deliver hot  
chocolate ...  
Using the app *Cyrano* to text someone by someone else ...

187

You ... as red carpet junkie ... aliases stuffed in pockets ...

Names dropping from the ceiling... Any resemblance  
to persons, living or dead, is entirely coincidental...  
You insist on farmhouses... and aqueducts...  
and emails routed to an unmonitored inbox...  
Fine with me...  
A quick pick-me-up... a probiotic... might do...  
The deductible, however, is still there  
staring you down... Not that easy to lose, yes?...  
You came... you saw... you came again!...  
Reveling in the lips of the neighborhood...  
Stepping into the morning after  
trailing a cast of identity thieves with false lanyards  
milling around the fax... after the awards...  
Too much fidgeting... and you know what that means...  
Full disclosure yields facial tics  
which more often than not are dead giveaways...  
I'd rather not go there today... or any day for that matter...

188

There are lightning bolts in your cereal bowl...  
You have become true north... again... Gerrymandering  
the neighborhood in provocative teamwear...  
usernames on the back in iridescent blue...

Earwormed since Thursday...  
*How long, O Catiline, will you tax our endurance?...*  
*How long will that madness of yours escape us?...*  
*To what ends will your unruly boldness hurl itself at us?...*

The bullet-holed replica of something really important...  
Grapefruits... for better or worse...  
Irrespective of your height, you carry it well...  
Institutionalization will squeeze into your mastery...

What is requisite, here, anyway?... Roll back the years?...  
I don't think so... Yellowing with age, I couldn't help  
but think of the foghorn  
in that little bistro on the corner of homeplate...

Remembering the biscuits we threw at our hunger  
and how after the entre, you insisted  
on itemizing your deductions ... before it was too late ...  
Frankly, my dear ...

189

*Mass is a numerical measure of inertia.*

- Sarah Gerard, *Binary Star*

We all have indentations ... you're no different ...  
We all worry critical mass ...  
the nominal fees ...  
the exhortations ...  
slouching towards somewhere ... Neverland perhaps? ...  
The other day for example for whatever reason  
I experienced a momentary lapse ...  
numbers tumbling into orbit ...  
a metronome insinuating itself into a few measures ...  
the cellist having forgotten her bow ...  
What is there to say? ...  
You place your chips in the eclipse ...  
You snowshoe into white silence ...  
Channeling Emily and random acts of pulchritude ...  
lowering her basket of cookies to neighborhood urchins ...  
Your puzzle rearranges itself ... with or without your OK ...  
Acceleration always bests gravity ...  
The table is double-wide ...  
The fellowship ... of classical perspectives ...  
is yesterday ... still yesterday ...  
Something new ... something unheard of ...  
from your late middle ages ... would be nice ...

190

Encumbered by the finish fetish  
you reach for your jawboned *Field Guide to Getting Lost*  
and welcome the prophet into the room ...  
An opportune Q&A  
with plenty of white space to stretch out in ...

It's good to ignore the caveat before silence grabs the mic  
and launches into one-liners  
so flat they get lost in the crowd... immediately...

191

That you could have read the script...  
without the interruptions... the ooh la la's...  
without the strip malls and their queues...  
without those who - oh no! -  
fell down the rabbit hole...  
SoundCloud echoing their anthem...  
The morning after... is also the morning before...  
Where would you be  
if you had been able to read  
your words before you wrote them?...  
before you were pressed into another run-through?...  
Imagine the excitement in the first page...  
the principals lining up... behind the curtain...  
your words rising from their moorings...

192

I've got Blue Light Specials on the brain  
and telepathic cats  
whose ho-hum antics flip some of the days of my life  
forestalling the inevitable  
with voluminous digs...  
and elephant handlers from bedraggled circuses  
whose answers to five of the BIG TEN questions  
tell the rest of the story...  
a story that begins with loose ends  
in the uninformed Midwest  
when arcades were all the rage...  
*They were all the rage, yes?...*  
and sodbusters busted sod for pennies... and promises...  
and free passes to Miss Kitty's...  
I thought I knew what you were talking about  
but I was wrong...  
Maybe it's me but now you're wandering the basilica...

bemoaning the fate of urban survivalists  
and their camo'd beneficiaries  
who took to the streets ... once too often ...  
and now ... barbarians are storming the gate  
with rainchecks ... and apps from midways  
of sepia'd carnivals  
brimming with aging-out clowns bumping bulbous noses  
with trapeze artists ... left hanging ...  
Did you think you could look them in the eye  
and not see your selfie? ...  
The selfie you Photoshopped ... while the audience slept ...  
and magicians sprang from top hats  
with a velocity that Feynman himself  
would have chuckled over while beating his bongos  
faster than spawns on speed  
costumed as amphibians auditioning for a remake  
of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*  
which incidentally was the first flick I saw in a theater ...  
with my mother ... and bag of popcorn ...  
You haven't been yourself lately ...  
I'm not sure who you are  
and trying to figure out who you are  
is costing too much time ...  
I had planned to begin the new year ... with warm-ups  
and adult education classes  
and independent living  
but now with warm weather flooding the transom  
I'm ready to attempt another channel crossing  
or collect misfit canisters at the Himalayan base camp  
rubbing shoulders with the polloi  
for pocket change ... and wheelwright dubs ...  
The other day, for example, I had a senior moment ...  
not quite *Still Alice* ... by a long shot ...  
but ... nonetheless ... OK, a junior moment ...  
and I was off ... channel surfing  
for lost causes ... and incidentals that could ...  
maybe ... possibly ... hopefully ... tingle ...  
with a tax shelter to die for ...  
Is it really all in the cards? ...  
Or have I too been misled ... into a kindergarten ...



populated with multiple personalities?...  
Now wouldn't that be the stuff for an HBO microseries?...  
Little consolation here ... or anywhere, for that matter...

193

Haunting data dumps for identity thefts...  
Assigning numbers ... to players in your fantasies  
whose epidemic of namelessness  
crowds out sleep ... and the counting of sheep...  
You are among strangers ... fun, yes?...  
The freedom ... to be ... or not to be ...  
to do ... or not to do ...  
The new you ... costumed in shades of gray...  
inhabiting the margins of blurry-eyed websites ...  
teasing coders and first-person shooters  
with objects of desire and launch dates  
and fleeting moments ... of screen-capture ...  
Kiosks double as security checks  
with clickable protocols ... and farm fresh fruit...  
for those wasting time in the waiting line ...  
Surely this will morph into an eponymous best seller...

194

You are about to open ... as the Once and Future Queen ...  
in an off-off-Broadway production  
of *Goshawk: The Movie* ...  
a regression line ... a line of best fit...  
for your short-shorter-shortest story ... of alchemy and  
falconry ...  
The word on the street is that you consulted with Merlin...  
that you got free tickets ... and limes ...  
and that the two of you ... threw back a few ...  
talking old times ...  
In the heat of the moment  
the scroll wilted, yes?...  
But the Method stepped in ...  
What about the burned-out pizza man  
and the other character actors on your To-Do-Me List

that you kept waving in our faces at the ribbon-cutting? ...  
Yes, the temps have been off-putting ... I'll give you that ...  
sparkling images of sandy beaches  
and envelope stuffing ...  
Perhaps we should call their agency ... and return  
to your Binky Days ... which you unknowingly opened  
the door to ... with an inadvertent speed-dial ...

195

If you had been on top of things ... as is typical ...  
you could have set them straight  
or at least hooked them up with executive assistants  
charged with emailing releases  
to focus groups ... convalescing from bum knees  
and other such inconveniences ...  
When did concatenation become a hassle? ...  
Everything mashed-up ... mashed-together ...  
with few downloadable eBooks  
which though burdensome to some  
occasionally spell things out ... in black and white ...  
A landscape ... of fading inconsequentials  
will soon appear in your viewfinder ...

196

You page forward ... scanning ...  
hoping that perhaps by chance you missed it ...  
the invitation ...  
the extended hand ...  
the quiet word ...  
This talk of elliptical relationships ...  
of the difference between suspend ... and pause ...  
at the end of your sentences ...  
As if time were irrelevant ...  
As if the profusion of peculiarities  
was enough to circumvent the dull day-to-day ...  
And now you're clearing your throat ...  
Preparing for what? ... An ultimatum? ...  
How often have you spun around

only to find yourself in the same place? ...  
The same people ... the same you ...  
As perfunctorily, yes? ...  
He wanted a profusion ... No! ... No! ... No! ...  
She wanted a profusion ...  
Noise, please ... and chatter ...  
You are poised to go the distance ...  
We all are poised to go the distance ...  
however ... whenever ... wherever ...  
The pieces themselves ... and their wonderful integrity ...  
Your complete ... and independent life ...  
Hanging on scraps of conversation ...  
Tell me ... again ... about detachment ...

197

The days ... like paper ... curl at the edges ...  
This is a paper day! ... This is a paper town! ...  
The bandoneon ... paper ...  
The restaurant ... paper ...  
The wait staff ... paper ...  
How we'd grab lunch ... at KFC ... aka The Dead Colonel's ...  
on our way back to the office ...  
black-eyed Susan ... shadowing ...  
The red taillights mutter something ...  
Participles in tow ...  
You begin with a tale of entrapment ...  
Your voice ... incantatory ...  
The communal voice jarring in its intimacy ...  
Please spare me your vivid imagination ...  
Now you're going on about papyrological evidence ...  
Yes, of course I remember Lon Chaney, Jr.  
in *The Mummy's Tomb* ...  
Do I detect an insurgency in your voice? ...  
Are you sure you want to go there ...  
now that the bargain basement blatherers  
have come and gone  
retreating with their wash-and-wears  
to their nomadic hideaways  
GPS'd with a .01 level of confidence? ...

Are these events queued? ...  
I'm in a subjunctive mood ...  
I'm ready for ready-mades ...  
I need to cull a few more fragments ... from slush piles ...  
It's all about evading artifice ... isn't it? ...  
I mean that's where we will surely find authenticity  
outback ... having a smoke ...  
with Jim Jarmusch's *Only Lovers Left Alive* ...  
Forget the blithering obits ... with their avid avids  
and their connect-the-dots sensibility ...  
The trouble you identified ... is off ... and running ...  
The interim chair ... with his/her new do ...  
had it down pat ... as evidenced by the doors  
opening and closing in time to *Mary had a little lamb* ...  
The fleece ... connective tissue ...  
The after-hours mix the what-ifs ... with the whatevers ...  
The clock forgetting where it is ...  
You pick up your story from the top ... with you on top ...  
plotting the quickest route ... between here and not here ...  
the bags of groceries ... in the trunk ... moldering ...  
the bags ... under your eye-shadowed eyes ...  
playing hangman ... in the back seat with the whomevers ...

198

No regrets, then ... hunkering days here in this backwater ...  
Reviewing your Norman Conquests ... journaling  
happenstance ...  
Playing croquet with paper-thin walls ...  
Voices retreating behind Acts of Contrition ...  
You signed on for the tour, yes? ...  
Everyone's dreams ... everyone else's ...  
You may as well order takeout ...  
fire up Netflix ...  
and hire a driver for the rented dump truck  
that cameoed in your tween fantasies  
when he/she invited you to a Monopoly sleeper  
and began with unbearable lightness  
that plowed through 233 pages  
before you passed Go ...

Perhaps the desire to fictionalize your life, a little bit? ...  
As when we suicide ourselves for survival ...  
in what some call a *Kierkegaardian Third Remove* ...  
Your dreams are now 100 years old ... and counting .....

199

You appear in a crack in the surface of the code  
and pick through vinyls ...  
sandbox memories of players  
in baseball caps ... worn backwards ...  
auditioning for a seat in the eye of the beholder ...  
the difference between here(s) ...  
between his/her reply to your suggestion ...  
changed the rules  
notwithstanding their superfluousness  
and ... again ... you are ... on the brink  
waiting for an arm to reach out of the sky ...  
the sky that David Bowie enshrined ...  
while teasing metonymic memories  
of Penetration Dialogues ...  
You can't imagine, yes? ...  
Holding forth with insignificant others  
waiting at a bus stop  
leaking delusions of travel  
promising a destination ...  
Not one to hold anything against anyone ...  
You roll the dice ... for today ...  
channeling Caesar in the Rubicon ...  
and tap your fingers ... until the craving passes ...  
Is this how you want it to be written up? ...

200

You have choreographed the phrase *in perpetuity*  
and now hold questions for ransom  
their depth and dimension reminders of your years  
of indentured servitude  
feeding lines to woebegones  
exiting the stage ... waiting to be wrung out ...

You have nailed the mores ... and more ...  
playing subjectivity to anomaly  
unmellowed by time ... and the river ...  
your dance ... a study in mirror-image ...  
taking no prisoners ... comparing pleasures  
with those who have come ... and gone ...  
and come again ...  
bearing words ... best appreciated in silence ...

201

You deal euphemism ... and slip past security ...  
the music half-house ... clouding the drone ...  
wandering with *couldn't care less* on inked sleeves  
as if encapsulated messages  
were selling for junk ... on the street ...  
Indigents switch ingredients  
for compassion's busboys ... all this secondary  
to the concentration on gesture ...  
the humor disguised as a fatalists witty rue ...  
You jot notes ... for transcription ... amid the static  
of traffic lights ... O'Ding night's follies ...  
too wired ... too close ... to close ...  
rethinking alternatives ... even when he/she soft focuses  
the context ... with promises ... of other worlds ...

202

Dissecting the sameness ... of long terms ...  
the insinuations ... despite the firewall ...  
the momentary lapses  
followed by naïve mea maxima culpas ...  
How the morning begins with eyes above cups of coffee  
stalls over croissants  
jump-starts ... in the afternoon  
with a double-header ...  
Then a special delivery ... on a hot fragrant night  
reading between the lines  
your imagination filling the gaps  
because you need (love?) ... closure, yes? ...

You retreat to seascapes  
to the sound of the surf  
the waves licking the sand  
below small coastal villages  
wedged into the hills ... of your short stories ...  
And the ambient gestures ... of an intimate bistro  
glasses of pinot noir talking up the pleasures of silk ...  
the fury of connections ...

203

That experts disagree threw you for a infinite loop ...  
Discovering something ... then forgetting it ...  
A tollbooth in the middle of this line  
making it impossible to determine if you are unhappy or  
sublime ... compounded by the desperate obliqueness  
of the matter-at-hand ...  
I mean ... Really? ...  
And those bystanders ... texting like mad ...  
How could they? ...  
Then to top it off ... a diagnostic category  
crashes the party and upsets the apple cart  
oblivious to the nuances of those in the know ...  
Listen ... Why don't we blow this joint  
and tab ourselves into Neyerland ... or Whateverland? ...  
G'mon ... Did you think you could sustain the effort? ...  
What with the baggage that has obliterated your selfie  
and colored your days  
with muted Hajlmarkian ramifications? ...

204

Your fixation on ancient obelisks ... is a pinched nerve  
demanding a steroid injection  
a flippancy that derails dime-a-dozeners ...  
And now you're sweating the stylistic devices of S. Freud  
and the probe of this poem  
and the probe of something else not yet identified  
finding yourself in the deli section  
worrying enjambments ... the accrual of lines

the orchestration of loneliness ...  
You're trying to score, yes? ...  
Trotting out the notion  
that the poet creates and alleviates loneliness ...  
I think you're losing readers  
with your otherness  
with your self-conscious selfie ...  
They think they know what you're thinking ...  
I don't think they know ...  
What do you think? ...  
Let them continue ... to talk to themselves  
and propose their (unsought) intimacy ...  
The spin cycle is almost over, yes? ...  
Trying to figure us out? ...  
But inconsistency is our forte ... our *mise en scene* ...  
Beginning with the line *How should a person be?* ...  
The nosedive ... yes ... is bound to happen ...  
It will give us something to believe in  
if only for the moment ... parlaying streaming options  
holding us ... stroking us ... telling us to remain seated  
for the entire white-knuckle construct  
with complimentary mini-carafes  
of something mint-flavored ...

205

*...fiercely wanting, as we all do, just a little more of life?*

- Mary Oliver

That's the funny thing about *relinquish* ...  
The Etch-A-Sketch world we inhabit  
is improvisational ...  
a table-read for a sitcom ...  
wading through early morning pools  
across mountains ... and rivers  
taking elements of calm with our coffee  
before the exit interview  
at a strange station ...  
You spend the day painting ... *en plein air*  
palette loaded with muted pigments



capturing ... interpretations of your dreams  
scripts ... to be staged ...  
This is what you did ...  
This is what you wanted to do ...  
This is what you were meant to do ...  
We all have answers  
some better than others  
well, maybe not better ... different, yes? ...  
with tag lines that sometimes grab us  
and hold us ... gently rocking us ... in the moment  
forgetting the edge ...  
letting the body love ... what it loves ...

206

Connecting the dots of the day  
magic markers bleed through the paper  
the corners ... unsafe at any speed ...  
Geese ... honk approval  
of coolheaded air traffic controllers ...  
Too many books soundtracking your life  
too many pictures, yes? ...  
Reviewing the PowerPoints in your head ...  
The slides ... and their seductive asides ...  
Too much? ...  
Moments ... when all data are dumped  
with the sunrise cajoling  
and walking through a field  
you find huge beasts ... shadowing the sun ...

207

Again you are in the back seat ... with a redacted script  
counting the exits the entrances the players  
and their parts ...

Your OCD-fueled insistence ... awaits Throwback Thursday  
with its alternate interpretations ... its alternate  
positions ...

What would happen for example if you encouraged others  
to shed their masks ... their gambits ...  
their dreamscapes? ...

What would happen if you opened yourself  
to the Seven Levels? ...  
Would the candy store still hold its sweetness? ...

208

With you taken by digital fluff  
I've decided to stop obsessing over the fit and finish  
of bodies in motion  
and instead map the terrain of humdrum ...  
risking sweet confusion  
with a tongueless loafer  
in residence under the daybed  
idly strumming a guitar  
in a Spanish cafe ... with apps ... no less ...  
Why wrinkle at the thought of dawdling  
over the saggy moments  
that will soon overtake us? ...  
Perhaps the days will turn into fresh loaves  
of sourdough? ...  
Something we can laugh about, anyway, yes? ...

209

Illusory at best ... but then ... why not? ...  
The moments ... peering through the glass ...  
journal in hand ...  
When everything ... and everyone ...  
What do you mean ... say it for the judge? ...  
I have no intention of implementing a full-court press  
and ... quite frankly ... I don't care  
what the life coach said ...  
He too is just going through the motions ...  
He too knows full well  
that there are bigger fish to fry ...  
With the day turning wintry

lets try to recapture the play  
as it was ... or, rather, as we remember it...  
Yes, we've lapsed  
but that's what makes it interesting, yes? ...

210

You should have been carded  
instead of fitted with full-body armor  
as you spasmed awake ...  
his/her hands explicating your microcosms ...  
You began a journal  
*when lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd*  
smoothing out the edges of sitcoms  
your glass in the mirror defying your losses  
which soon increased exponentially  
with the shapes and colors of the rooms  
whose ceilings you'd spec'd for restoration  
as you half-listened to nursery rhymes ...  
Your family and friends gathered  
for deepest sympathies  
but you were elsewhere  
tallying spiders in the trash bags  
that befriended you  
throughout your crusade phase ...  
You often overdosed  
on the bald spots of left fielders  
as they tongued third base ...  
This too became grist for your journal  
dictated while your left hand  
maneuvered the yellow Cobra  
repainted red by migrant workers  
who knelt before copies of your field notes  
while regurgitating almanac  
and telephone numbers  
from restroom stalls ...  
Concision drove you to out-of-the-way movie houses ...  
You loved indies and edgy outerwear  
and the five o'clock shadows  
that caressed your inner sanctum ...

Independent studies became your mantra...  
How often did you picture the Argonauts  
as you mimicked your favorite silent screen stars  
who time and again stiffed you for the last call?...

211

Your dreams of curating an exhibit of shopping carts  
ooze seduction  
an overdosing on blue pigment  
a candying of the afternoon  
shoplifted... from performance spaces  
where dust refuses to settle...  
Persons of interest  
hiding in the wooden horses  
parading through the streets  
await the phases of your tongue which  
like the phases of the moon  
are well-versed in telemetry and round-robin competition  
reducing so-called experts  
to blubbering blunderers  
paper-trailing their oblong lives  
with highlighted aftermaths  
as your delectability seeps through the cacophony  
bewildering those whose pages jockey for translation  
while the moon again engages twenty questions...

212

Recalibrating the unnecessary... as always...  
The lines blur...  
You escape into your obsessions...  
The day arrives amid stars and stripes  
of conspicuous deletions... and evacuations...  
Clocks lose their patience  
with out-of-pocket co-pays  
and recurring beginners...  
Do something... in an effort to...  
or have you too fallen through the cracks?...  
Really?... If you think about it...

I mean ... if you *really* think about it...  
Certainty peppered with arugula...  
Too many covers, yes? ...  
I would have liked to hear the acoustic stuff  
from their first double album ... of indiscretions ...

213

The streets fill with widows ... and widowers ...  
leashless dogs ... nightmares ...  
What's going on here? ...  
Sorry for the interruption ...  
Please continue hitting up liaisons  
for lunch money  
while I sort through pocket change  
for tokens ... totems ... talismans  
of past players ...  
Look, here's Enzo Ferrari  
fresh from a sabbatical  
pieced together ...  
You remember ... the champagne  
hugging curves in your all-night gymkhana? ...  
In uniform, yes? ...  
Meanwhile, homebodies suck up to succubi  
ignoring installation instructions  
and labels on mattresses ...  
*This may cause dizziness! ...*  
*Do not operate machinery! ...*  
*Don't say we didn't warn you! ...*  
Maybe it's the type of year ...  
a Michael Jackson type of year ...  
an Elmer Fudd type of year ...  
tonal registers ... bottlenecks ...  
trash piling up with unreturned returnables ...  
We have seen the enemy, etc ...  
Open a window ... will you please? ...  
The next chapter opens with ... what? ...  
The executive chef distracted ... by wallcreepers ...

You try on Saturday... for the weekend...  
 The lure of the costume... its episodic fringe...  
 Little or nothing unwanted...  
 What about the delicatessen... or subletting...  
 for that matter?...  
 Your bedroom eyes... jumpstart my ego...  
 We need to forward the email  
 lest interested parties will lose interest...  
 Then we'll have to wade through the cursory intro  
 doubtless written by an underling  
 trying to score points...  
 How many times have you gone there... on a lark?...  
 Those days... my dear... always come back  
 to haunt you... in or out of character...

Your days fill with the rigmarole of incidentals...  
 And now the weekend... with its pudgy demands  
 and misapprehensions...  
 Can you pick up the tab?...  
 That's a start at least... let's go... from there...  
 Why forfeit your ability to engage  
 by claiming ignorance... of the material  
 covered last week... in Chapter 11?...  
 You were tested on it, yes?...  
 The incomprehensibility you're experiencing  
 is part of the lure...  
 And the hat?...  
 Was it the unfunny of undressing  
 before Letterman's last hurrah  
 or something as irksome as plantar fasciitis?...  
 Wash and wear the evidence  
 adrift in espionage... with those avatars of yesteryear  
 so quick to pounce on inklings...  
 I know what you're thinking...

They said they're on it... No reason to doubt them...  
 What about you? ...Have you given it any thought  
 beyond Bo Peep's lost sheep?...  
 Don't sweat the effluvia of the current  
 moment... or the cash bar... with its sharp edges  
 and penchant to stymie...  
 You have pinned many bogglers to the mat  
 and though the outcome has the potential to become tiresome  
 go with it... phone it in...  
 Unfasten the kayak... give it a paddle...  
 The morning's yawn... sparks a twitch... dormant for  
 semesters...  
 Yes, this is!...

Filling in the gaps... you can't imagine how it's possible  
 to manage beyond the here and now...  
 Excavating... to find a new role  
 then dropping back  
 as if to dust the body for prints...  
 A car enters... and exits... and enters... on cue...  
 Like many, you believe...  
 kid yourself into believing?...  
 Have the jokers been removed from the deck?...  
 It's your turn as bouncer  
 as the one who handles situations...  
 the whatever's of crowds... the somethings-or-other...  
 I should review my notes... again...  
 Funny how words keep changing  
 bouncing into acceptabilities...  
 What's that?... The acceptabilities part?...  
 I don't understand... the drama of midday...  
 Of course, you do...  
 Of course, you've seen it coming...  
 Of course, we've all seen it coming...  
 The muted tones... the outrageousness of being...  
 And nothingness?... C'mon, drop the name, Sartre, yes?...

Standing...sitting...lying...  
Returning to the scene...or trying to...  
Is this your...as they say...comfort zone?...  
Just out of reach...until...BAM!...

218

*Was I the same when I got up this morning?*  
- from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

A labyrinth of incomplete sentences stalks you  
through a minimart...  
Your OCD...on Facebook...  
How often have you colored the moment monochromatically  
or flashed gym rats while directing a PowerPoint?...  
Later, in the parking lot...  
you'll have plenty of time to pay homage  
to nose jobs and rubbery rules...  
Plenty of time to resurface...in a bowl of Wheaties  
as the gluten-free leave their shoes at the door  
which revolves...in time to a somnambulist's theme...  
Deleting emails surreptitiously?...Why not?...  
Please don't ask...if I knew...I now don't...  
or do I?...

219

*The game is afoot*  
- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*

The costumes for kayaking will kick it up a notch  
stroke...for stroke...for stroke...  
the line in the parking lot  
waiting to be crossed...at the creek...  
Why spend time categorizing snores?...  
This is NOT OK!...  
You excel at pantomime...and schadenfreude...  
Segueing...at will...to questions of provenance  
and grayed-out menu options...



Is there a way around the question of importunity  
where poor choices are commonplace  
and the sloshing is enough to drive some bananas? ...  
Preconditions? ...of course! ...  
A smattering ...of odds and ends, perhaps? ...  
Whose words are these anyway? ...  
Have you run the 5k past your lawyer? ...  
I demand a recount  
and a transcript of the deposition ...  
We all know the bigger pictures call-waiting  
will only wait so long  
not unlike your own fait accompli, yes? ...

220

*The earliest form of adornment, shells used as beads,  
is thought to date back about 100,000 years.*

- Jenny Diski

It was on the tip of my tongue but fell through the cracks ...  
Foraging through trash won't cut it  
but rest assured you'll have plenty of time  
when the hard drive crashes  
and the rain drives everyone inside ...  
The year-end party, yes? ...overtures ... what not ...  
Did someone say Mom and Pop? ...  
They've been out of commission for years ...  
Time to redeem your coupons for new place settings ...  
The past is too slippery to hold on to  
despite your delusions and good dental hygiene ...  
Besides ... it's never as good as you think it was ...  
Google it if you think I'm all wet ...  
Something will trigger something else ... and then ...

221

Funny how costume changes expose our inner brush strokes  
and pave the way for unannounced site visits  
by philatelists worrying event parking ...  
Ballet dancers with their tight tendons and tight buns

and tight demeanor know this ...  
know that with the right moves  
you can take yourself to the edge ... straddle it  
and jump off with absolute control ...  
Playing name games is fun and flirty ...  
Just ask twizzle-dee and twizzle-dum ...  
Ha, I knew the bathwater was implicated ...  
There have always been cover-ups  
and TV dinners with missing chapters ...  
You had hoped to dispel worry ... but it managed to steal home  
with an abridged version of summer  
as recommended by those counting down the minutes  
to the opening gambit ...  
Incidentally, when was the last time  
you forked over leftovers  
to passersby who went on to write reams  
about the drudgery of off-color junkets? ...  
Time to adjourn to the Cape, yes? ...  
Not that you haven't a history of availing yourself  
of every opportunity you heard about on Staten Island ...

222

*... if you scratch an actor you will find a child.*  
- Sir Richard Eyre, *Utopia and Other Places*

I have no idea what you're talking about  
but please continue ...  
I will set the periodic table as requested  
and master the misquotes  
which should do well on the open market  
despite the niggling problems with fair trade coffee ...  
Haven't the cormorants done a masterful job  
shepherding the summer? ...  
Who would have thought? ...  
The fascination with constellations  
has sent minions running for cover ...  
I don't understand the point of newsfeeds ...  
Please be patient with the ATM ... It's all we have ...

223

You're prattling on... about barometric pressure and  
migraines...  
Hiding under sheets of sound...  
trying to make the most of a nose-thumbing day  
that's threatening to botch the weekend...  
Release the algorithms  
but please try not to frighten the newly-hatched  
who have their own 12-step program to master...  
A hummingbird's cue  
and you're into the next chapter and verse  
tallying the circumstances that squeezed through the  
aperture...

224

But then someone says... Oh, forget it...  
So what's the point?...  
Yes, we all mix fragments of memoirs  
into what we would like to think are tasty stews...  
puff... puff... puff... the Magic Dragon...  
The Etch-A-Sketch approach to lingua franca...  
Your meal tucked into Styrofoam...  
Your friends... back to worrying gingivitis...  
Please don't blame them...  
Ask yourself how often you staked the wrong claim  
quibbling over the placement of tchotchkes  
your voice lifting... into a marginal climb...  
the hometown favorites benched...  
And now, Maestro?...  
Pinning your spit-shined accomplishments  
as if those in the know knew...  
A terracotta trophy supersized for the winner...

225

*...nobody, not even the rain, has such small hands.*  
- E. E. Cummings

Your n of 1 experiment...or experiments ...  
where I - and many - have never traveled  
though I'm sure our dreams have dipped in a toe or two  
testing the water with a fragility so intense  
its texture colors other lands  
and summons players... to the play  
conjuring the slots in Atlantic City  
where ...in another time ...your look unclothed  
odds-and-enders  
lost in the snows of high summer  
mesmerized by the sound of the bangles  
encircling your thin wrists ...  
your voice ... the color of rain ...

226

Incidentally, the sidebar was a hit  
accolades from the second floor  
ying for a seat behind home plate  
where it always seems ...  
You could have at least tried  
but, nobiggie, I rarely expect more ...  
It's just one of those things  
that seems to gain momentum ...with each stroke ...  
Your dreams of gymnasts  
before suiting-up ...or suiting-down  
for your latest foray ...into the Land of Reps ...  
all eyes on your prize-winning muffins ...  
A trophy case in a dusty doilies parlor  
Grampa at the Stromberg-Carlson  
the days when (k)nights were bold  
and steeds were prancing  
with poor Miniyer growing leaner by the nanosecond ...

227

It's not what you expected ...  
First Netflix ...and now? ...the table read? ...  
Why think otherwise  
when experience has spelled it out on the whiteboard? ...

Editing the one-act might be the way to go  
at least to buy time  
before we go in for the full catastrophe  
tap dancing with bells and whistles  
not unlike those who preregistered  
for the cancelled course ...  
The life of a delusion can be edifying ... and fun ...  
certainly seductive ... for most ...  
who instead of skipping to the last chapter  
linger among words elsewhere ...  
letting the letters slide down their cool bodies ...

228

Mimicking Whistler's *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1*  
you await the voices  
which usually arrive at dinnertime  
with stories, reflections, digressions ...  
sometimes with histories of common objects  
like saltshakers ... or deodorant sticks ...  
This is not your mother's bailiwick  
with its arsenal of words  
jaggedly penciled onto drying canvases  
going head-to-head with Twombly's crayony pronouncements  
from lost worlds ...  
You color in Agnes Martin  
with a diagnosis of schizophrenia ... and shock treatments  
sitting - off her rocker - on a serious rocker  
in her adobe studio in Taos  
waiting for the voices to quiet  
before resuming her brushwork  
on six-by-six-foot canvases ...  
A hummingbird at the feeder tweets you  
capturing everything but disclosing nothing as you  
exchange protocols and arrive - with French press -  
at the solitude of the blank page ...

229

Into the indescribable ...

as if sliding across a mirrored floor ...  
This ... your focus ...  
No stranger to Yeats's *center cannot hold*  
you embrace misdirection ...  
the futility of bemoaning ...  
the loss ... of what? ...  
In time, notches accrue ... the word spreads ...  
The football team ... out of the huddle ...  
appears as yesterday's super heroes with revisions ...  
You terminate the hiatus ... apply for sainthood ...  
1 ... 2 ... 3 ...  
while the springing offspring learn to roll  
with the punches  
auditioning ... auditioning ... for bit parts ...  
voiceovers ...

230

The medievalists in the back carrels are tambourining ...  
fast talking in a dead language  
about Intensive Outpatient Programs ... IOP for short ...  
I've had enough for one day with fancy fonts ...  
I'm not about to jump into anything willy-nilly ...  
Slip on your four or five inch heels  
and avail yourself of every nook and cranny ...  
Take the alternate route to grandmother's house ...  
Dickinson's *Wheels of Birds* ... awaits your arrival ...  
I've no idea what I'm waiting for ... no idea whatsoever ...  
This happens to you, as well, yes? ...  
Call me when it's over ... we'll ask for seconds ...  
That'll throw some for a loop ...  
dislodging the boredom of board games  
with a few tidbits from Wittgenstein ... or Whitman ...  
A blind alley ... for sure ...  
where you choke on one after another? ...  
And you thought it was the expected thing to do? ...

231

The unreasonable shoes of infidelity track mud

into your room  
where you lie as if dissected  
tossing words to the wind  
getting your casual partners ...  
Apparently you've forgotten that walls have ears ...  
Again... yes, begin again ...  
Remove your wrap ...  
Label your inked body parts ...  
You will find yourself in Chapter 3 of a novella  
with characters muting themselves  
to impress you ...  
A UPS truck will try to insinuate itself ...  
Frozen moments ... but not without excitement ...  
The image of you jumping rope ...  
The dissonant notes of a life ...  
Did you cross the breezeway as scripted? ...

232

Stymied by incipient conversationalists ...  
telemarketers ... debunked scout leaders ...  
wrong-way-Corrigans  
who believe the end justifies something ...  
Amid the glory ... you do remember, yes? ...  
Gurfew was always a boondoggle for those being groomed ...  
We waited for the reflection in patent leather ...  
anticipating a world ... out of reach ...  
a world of bells and whistles ...  
Your life as a jpeg is about to begin ... again  
with Apple's release of iOS 9 ...  
Accelerate to Park Place on the board  
then jump ship and swim to the white sands  
of your fantasies ...  
You remember clubbing ... and the displaced ...  
their winsome troubling hands ...  
their grand slams ...  
their false starts ...  
their disheartening journeys in staircases ...  
Are you taking notes? ...  
There's an email in your inbox with store credit

and your next assignment...  
Trot out the seven levels ... go with Door #2...  
There will be a place for you ... for us ...  
a place hidden from the commonplace ...  
with reboots ... downloads ... and much ado ...

233

Accidental or artificial? ... you're not sure ...  
But the lyrics no longer do ...  
And the sidewalks have changed ... and the faces on the  
street ... and the enjambments ...  
You deserve a beard today  
with roving philosophers ...  
David Letterman and cluster flies ...  
*Am not I a fly like thee? ...*  
Hmm ... time to phone a friend, yes? ...  
Attach yourself to the next docent ...  
Don't worry about the moments that seem alien ...  
Everything is not meant to fall into place  
despite the signage ... clammy with fear ...  
Let your fingers do the talking ...  
Forestall the inevitable wrong turn ... if you can ...  
That's it ... take the next bus ...

234

You see yourself on a train pulling out of a station  
and worry exposure ...  
your eyes filling with after-images of another life ...  
If only we could apply the filter in real-time ...  
teasing would-be fornicators ... and followers  
with words in the round ... round words  
morphing into quintuplets  
who, as far as the eye - your eye - can see,  
will become first-rate watercolorists  
flanking the moments when understudies call from below as  
if you - only you - can grasp the turpentine in their lines ...



*Some part of me has always been drawn to stories of obsession.*

- Elizabeth Ellen

Appropriating words from an old dictaphone ...  
 I was asked to write this ...  
 You recall the manic chatter ... and the final moments  
 tinged with blinking neons  
 and barges slipping through narrow canals ...  
 You become obsessed with dilated pupils ...  
 googling the association between  
 dilation and attraction ...  
 You begin collecting photographs  
 of faces with dilated pupils ...  
 black and white photographs ...  
 Etch-A-Sketching the distance between you and them ...  
 the image narrating your moods ...  
 Off hours, you recall the hours  
 spent playing Slippery ...  
 obsessing over whether the eyes  
 of the one who was *It* were dilated  
 and whether it was an advantage  
 in the darkness ... and after ...  
 You remember studying his/her face  
 the expression ...  
 and how it changed with the story  
 and how you began taking notes  
 to memorialize the moment ...  
 the moment that would insinuate itself  
 again and again ... into your obsession ...

The inopportune moment ... when the pieces threaten  
 to fall into place ... and the time machine on the windowsill  
 begins churning out what seems to be nonsense ...  
 But isn't that what it's all about? ...  
 Spectrums of memories ... partners ... friends ...  
 gathering for a barbecue ... in someone's backyard? ...

Trips along the yellow brick road... to Neyerland?...  
Aloof in Neyerland... despite resolutions...  
despite dreams...  
despite the familiar resurfacing... again...  
and again...  
amanuenses taking down your sputterings...  
This and other talismans scaffolding your delusion...

237

Sentences brimmed with allusion... pace the halls...  
You as subject?... object?...  
I will find meaning between the lines...  
Auditioning... despite the nausea...  
A curiosity that refuses to be quenched... by routine...  
En pointe... the indifference disappears  
as you immerse yourself in the choreography...  
Perhaps the excitement of what's supposed to matter?...  
of what's supposed to happen?...  
or what you hope will happen?...  
Forgetting the roadmap in the cereal box  
and the acquaintances with their run-on sentences...

238

This is not a room for making spaghetti...  
There are yurts for that sort of thing...  
All buttoned-up against the cold... with leggings even...  
transferring balances... just because...  
orchestrating the place settings for a birthday bash...  
Little matter... the conspiratorial deadline  
with players arranging themselves for photo-shoots  
will remain chemically imbalanced...  
You were meant to follow along?...  
I don't think so...  
Since when did you trouble yourself with nuances  
or with the tracks of Sunday schoolers?...  
This could be a stopgap... a hack... a time for reflection...  
lying in a new warp... with all that time to prep...  
and tweak your M0...

A tad rusty...but who's counting? ...  
You recall your 20s  
with the devil-may-care costumes  
jotting scripts from late night tete-a-tetes  
as you made your way across town  
in the back seat of a cab...

239

We are all tunnelers...inhabiting grocery lists ...  
flirting with former selves  
dispatched by voiceovers  
into the wind and rain and darkness ...  
Is living in the moment an option  
or has it too been grayed-out by instrumentalists  
who hold the key ...and the score ...  
to the latest overture? ...  
Recapping what led up to wherever we are  
poses difficulties ... though not insurmountable ...  
It's nothing more than what we're good at ...  
Making do with the lakeside cabin of our dreams  
while clinging to the hope of finding the final piece  
to the puzzle that peers from the loneliness  
of our back room closet where the spirits of players  
await the opening of the Series ...

240

Your inner Groucho tickled, you begin unpacking your  
ditties for another weekend of he said she said  
cataloging the emptiness of mismatched furniture  
and late-night detective shows ...  
You could have told me ... about the insignificance  
begging to be jotted down ...  
I am ready for the interview ...  
Stung into disbelief ... you choose not to follow along ...  
Good for you! ...  
Forget the trenches ... you were not meant for trenches ...  
A certain foolishness enters the room ...  
You can't help yourself ...

as you study yourself in the mirror ...  
But I know the ending ...  
Really? You know the ending? ... to what? ...  
All endings are pretty much the same, yes? ...  
I want to float unfettered in a hot-air balloon  
high above the cities ... and towns ... and canals ...  
of your imagination ...  
I know where I have been ... I know that much ...  
I have always aimed to please ... myself, of course ...  
Et vous? ...

241

You make a funny face ... and know you are kidding ...  
slipping it past the others  
as the car warms for the trip ... over the bridge  
and into the City  
with Gram taking pictures of you costumed  
like everyone else  
cut to hook the imagination and jumpstart the excursion  
into the clubs of the good ... the bad ... and the ugly ...  
It's not just a game, yes? ...  
It's a passage ... a maze of hooplas ...  
I am like them ...  
nurturing the stages of development  
as experimenter  
double-blinding players  
hairy ... horn-a-plentied  
with lips and tongue ... fake phone numbers ... and more ...  
from an irretrievable uneditable unconscious ...

242

Your texts drip drama ... with intermissions ...  
intrusions ...  
impersonal enunciations ...  
free popcorn ...  
Trailing around with pockets turned out ...  
submarining ...  
Can we label this happenstance? ...

We interrupt this program for debugging, yes? ...  
The corrections shouldering their way  
into the everyday  
bathed in florescence ... in phosphorescence ...  
in nonchalance ... as if it were ...  
Inasmuch as it is, yes? ...  
The excitement of the express line ... orgasmic ...  
Carpooling on a cloudy day ... in the passing lane ...  
Passing cars on the bridge ...  
The stalled cars from your past ...  
In the back seat of the stalled cars from your past ...  
I'm trying to counterbalance things here ...  
The interference though is getting the upper hand ...  
Why bother? ... you have to ask? ...  
You have to ask? ...  
Why excuse yourself, then, ... when so much is at stake? ...  
Witches burned at the stake! ...  
As if we were someone else ... penning anecdotes ...

243

You wake with Emily Bronte ... in your head ...  
and begin the day on page 216 ...  
The whacher (her spelling)  
watches kites circle prey  
as the days of your life open  
to the middle chapters  
hewn in a wild workshop (*Charlotte on Wuthering Heights*)  
which at best (lately) are lackluster  
and could use a fresh coat of paint  
like the eyesore down the block ...  
You ignore the lookalike crouching in the corner ...  
a would-be wannabe ... who came'd on Wheel of Fortune ...  
lusting after Vanna White ... and Pat Sajak ...  
The tale of two tongues? ...  
Where did all this come from? ...  
Surely a MacArthur Fellow  
had she not predeceased John D and Catherine T ...  
There are other items on your to-do list  
which most likely will get back-burnered ...

given the bareness of diagramming incomplete sentences  
to feed your OCD...  
your biographers... as well as the limp but happy stalkers  
from the House of the Rising Sun... appeased...  
Overhearing only the first half of the sentence?...  
But then... with the playoffs... a bit of calm...

244

The body unfolds... from a night of nightmares...  
ignoring joint pain... GERD...  
dissonant chapters in out-of-print books...  
It recoils... and enters a whitewashed room  
to collect itself... and the empties...  
circling... and circling...  
trying not to make eye contact...  
trying not to engage (enrage?) others...  
The choreography is deformed... preposterous...  
Words await words  
as news continues to pummel commuters...  
The world... out of balance... torqued...

245

They're talking doorbusters  
but you are trying to pace yourself  
sacred in your innocence  
editing notes you've jotted down  
from the notebook  
of your cubemate...  
You like to jump fences  
and feed birds who ride the rails...  
Take down the tree, they say...  
You ignore them...

246

You sleep through solicitations  
and are ticketed for doing 62 on the off ramp  
claiming Black Friday

and a Magical Mystery Tour of Wicker at Pier 1 ...  
A concave mirror intrudes ...  
You see yourself flirting with a fact-checker  
whose life resembles a cookie cutter  
dropping facets faster than names  
which no sooner skip to freedom  
through an artichoke grove ...  
Someone insists a barn swallow ...  
You have something else in mind  
a vestige of one of your deep fantasies ...  
an inferno of arms and legs ...  
Do you recall packing for the weekend  
worrying that your tablet would hang? ...  
I thought not! ...  
Indeed he/she did in fact hang on your every bite  
working through that log of braciolè  
though it was apparent that Bela Lugosi  
at the other table had rung the wrong bell ...  
A tad ticklish ... to say the least ...

247

You rearrange yourself for the next take ...  
Cameras capture still-lives ...  
The film crew channels Morandi ...  
I'm not interested in additional rehearsals ...  
Shooting cold ignites me ...  
Isn't it best to see aesthetics for what they are? ...  
A blush on the side of a barn? ...  
Reenactors on tiptoes ...  
Why present life chronologically ... cutting and  
pasting the elements of style as they occur? ...  
Exceptions 'R' Us ...

248

A new you ... with a new 'do ... will debut  
in a pair of pink satin coveralls  
from Fredericks of Bollywood ...

rollerblading burgers and Rustoleum at Sonic...  
dreaming a lateral to Hooters...

Pat Sajak sitting on Vanna White's Facebook page  
while phoning a friend...

He is the rhinestone cowboy...of your future...

The irrepressible urge to enter  
the Witness Protection Program  
forehead etched with years of hustling Bic disposables...

*I'm Popeye the Sailor Man!*  
*I'm Popeye the Sailor Man!*  
*I'm Popeye Dayle!...*  
*I'm Popeye Dayle the Sailor Man!...*

Your body double...double parked...  
pole-dancing in the cupola...  
The neighbors...out to lunch...  
What came first?...  
The chicken...or the frozen egg?...

249

The absurdist in you grabbed me mid-crunch...  
I've decided to continue the melodrama  
with visitors in scene three costumed  
as dispassionate LPNs on lunch break  
arguing the latest in metaphysical footwear...  
Again, you will recognize yourself  
despite your alter ego...  
despite the shout-outs...  
You have become irresistible...to some...  
a stand-in...for many...  
I've felt it in my bones...or something like that...  
Nothing transcendental...nothing osmotic...  
just the same-old same-old  
with its lollygagging personae  
defacing selfies...



Do you really want to kick it up a notch? ...  
Little repercussion, yes? ...  
Besides, the holidays are ready to pounce ... so, who knows? ...  
Midsections intruding ...  
I've lost my place ... again ...  
in line ... in the book ...  
Beware gestures that bespeak the other ...  
I recommend googling that ...  
For example, did the voiceover mean what it said  
trapped as it was inside an anechoic chamber? ...  
The right stuff ... or the real stuff ... whichever ...  
Don't worry ... you'll have time ...

250

Your UGG knockoffs do indeed send a message ...  
however cryptic ...  
As it should be, yes? ...  
What manner of brouhaha for the holidays? ...  
Anecdotes keep a'tweeting ...  
what with thirteen filibusterers a'filibustering ...  
to say nothing of the conundrum with the A+ students  
who have failed to belt themselves in  
for the inevitable crash  
and will doubtless end up on the cutting room floor ...  
And, yes, the departure ... from reality ...  
encased in a cloche ...  
Your pockets fill with familiarities ...  
but will that be enough? ...  
*The Times They Are A-Changin'* ... indeed! ...  
I'm sure he/she meant well ...  
despite the posturing, etc ...

251

The bifurcated life ... your call ... a cheesy app? ...  
You pine for exits ... for outs ... and ins ...  
recalling past commitments  
as you page through regrets  
your mother having called the police ...

more than once ...  
The basement...where you experimented  
with n's of 1, 2, 3...  
your trial balloons  
floating among the star-struck...  
You are blemished by detachment  
the inevitability of which danced circles  
around your off-days  
making promises  
that would later turn green with envy ...

252

Elsewhere, you experience a rare biography...  
a biography of postulates...of opposites...  
double meanings...squared...  
labyrinths...hidden panels...and then some...  
What is it?...  
Putting in time...chockablock...  
ingratiating yourself  
if only for the sake of getting your bearings  
in this Land of Unsound  
the electronic infrastructure cradled in your lap(top)...  
You have encountered these compositions before  
in the thin hours of clubbing  
asking for nothing...Yeah, right!...  
You should begin to feel somewhat composed  
in a few bars...better to hear yourself  
and the common ground shared by art and albatross...  
The introduction less harrowing, yes?...  
especially now that you've begun mastering the tracks  
of your chosen form...  
Think nothing of it, he/she said,  
and you will garner praise  
from the minions lining up for free samples ...

253

You worry adjacencies...and grand rounds...

and line-ups ...  
and find yourself mugging ... in a mirror  
with someone twice ... perhaps thrice ... your EQ ...  
dancing with the frightening thought of tenure  
in the sad playgrounds of retirement communities ...  
The notion of absenteeism ... of disappearance ...  
bumps you into a faster forward  
beginning with closer encounters at Bruegger's ...  
You know you can always didgeridoo ...  
And, yes, circular breathing will again  
release you  
buy you time to weather the latest in ultrawear ...  
your inner aborigine morphing  
into the next sonic terrain ...

254

Your histrionics are history  
now that the plants in their embellishments  
have been watered  
and taken out ... for a test drive ...  
Tire Pressure Monitoring Systems ... TPMS ...  
have it all ...  
especially when the downside is backing  
into a parking space  
with eyes on the trial balloon ...  
The elementary foci of gyroscopes  
coupled with the insignificant pages  
at the end of a book  
hoist groping for meaning to a new ...  
albeit preempted ... level  
where ifs ands and buts hold sway  
with shape-changing dismay ...  
I would be among the first to crease the corner  
marking my territory (so to speak) for the unspoken  
who are always ready to chime in  
with hot chocolate suggestions  
and other post-time swizzles ...  
Please continue bailing ... until we spot land ...  
or a reasonable facsimile ...

which, when faxed to Battlecreek, MI  
will bring you know who fame and fortune ...

255

As if mummification were a side effect  
of your (re)scribed meds ...  
a loophole in the quagmire of holidays  
the back halls decked  
with Morandi's dusty hues ...  
I am conversing with the thens and nows ...  
sidestepping altercations  
and alterations  
pining for takeoff from the cacophony of selfies ...  
The oblivion of the uninformed yet all-knowing ...  
intimations of immortality  
recollections of Malmac place settings ...  
when visiting the lavatory  
required permission ...  
Quickly, the parking lots are filling  
with blustery giftees  
who desire a return to the state of un-giftedness ...  
Is there indeed an equivalent  
to the humdrum of breakfast drinks  
that make palatable the blah blah blah of anchors  
sweating global warming  
on what seems like every street corner  
while dusting off between texts  
their honorary degrees ... of freedom? ...

256

*What if there were a hidden pleasure in calling  
one thing by another's name?*

- Rae Armantrout

In a voiced community ... A reasonable facsimile? ...  
Rehabbing yourself ... again ...  
you find remainders ... of close encounters ...  
under the floorboards ...

and begin running numbers  
applying algorithms  
posting weary pics from yesteryears ...  
You are positioning the stars over your bed  
for a takedown ...  
This will not make a difference ...  
Revisit the maps of your years  
parse sentences  
rethink the selections for today's menu ...  
Transcriptions of your names fetch big bucks ...  
This is not for public consumption ...  
Can you imagine the confusion  
when the heat from lava lamps begins to burn the skin  
and the History of Loneliness begs to differ? ...  
Why now? ...  
I have no idea ... None whatsoever ...  
Perhaps reviewing the dailies one more time  
will shed light on the contents of the missing chapters ...

257

Why be facetious ... using non-words  
with binary flavors? ...  
Feeling foolish? ... At this time of the year? ...  
Neologisms? ...  
No, the transits are in transit  
and the scenes are falling into place ...  
As if there were an overseer? ...  
Happenstance ...  
Ah, serendipitous, yes? ...  
Have you again forgotten your lines? ...  
You never had a problem entering a club  
and winging it ... on the fly ...  
Searching for a delusion to grab onto ...  
Not unlike the rest of the cast  
with their exits ... and their (en)trances ...  
their offset gypsyisms  
and monocular perspective ...  
We have tangoed outside the lines ... many times ...  
Humpty Dumpty as spotter ...

as serial list maker ...

as drone ...

You have waxed and waned with ... uh,

I've lost count ...

Little matter ... the taxonomy ... though Procrustean ...  
works ...

That is what it's all about, yes? ...

258

Yes, I know you saw it coming ...

hard and fast and in-your-face

gaggles of oom-pa-pas ... within earshot

seeking professional words

in their curmudgeonly way

while buying time on the parking meters

of their gratification ...

Lots of hootin' and hollerin'

which was supposed to be a big surprise

but that was last night ... now ...

with its wilted line of happy questioning

and one-too-many-overnighters

from past odysseys

when enigmatic avatars held sway

and curiosity was heavy metal ...

Come to think of it ... arms akimbo

would have been a nice touch ...

therapeutic ... indeed ...

which according to telemarketers

is guaranteed to elicit dismissive looks

from passersby

who know not so much ...

But we know better, yes? ...

Remember the shore

with words sulking between the lines

on the hot sand

when out was out and in was in? ...

Premature, perhaps? ...

It can be reversed

if you're willing to go the extra mile ...

don a costume ... for the duration of the interrogation ...  
speak iteratively in phrases  
clandestinely applied with a camel-hair brush ...  
Not so? ...  
Check out your carbon footprint ...  
Can you honestly say you've eliminated salt  
from your past life? ... lies? ...  
Food preparation qua reparation  
an inter-ocular undertaking ... if ever ...  
standing half-naked in the kitchen  
mutated banjos dueling in the background  
stirring up trouble ...  
What better way, yes? ...

259

*The committee convenes to determine when a work of art  
cannot be fixed or restored in the traditional ways ... and  
must, instead, be replicated.*

- Ben Lerner, *The Guardians*

Using 3-D printing to fabricate sculptural assemblages  
of body parts ... some bodies take in the exhibits at the  
museum ...  
others scrub toilets ...  
An old-timer the color of dust rides shotgun in a pickup  
the color of your scrunched hair ...  
Using the remote to switch roles ... again? ...  
Why monkeyshines? ...  
Your mother dead 15 years thinks you're out walking  
your big black mutt  
along the eerily-elevated High Line ...  
Thinking re-purposed artifacts? ...  
A jumping-off point ... so to speak ...  
Mystery? ... Yes! ...  
*Warning: In the current show of Internet art  
the complexity is not indicated in the placard  
beside the sculpture ...*  
Reprinting your past scripts in 3-D? ...  
The endgame cometh ...

Wooden players adjust their digital timers ...  
I will join them after I load the boiler ...  
Insignificant treasons ... of the heart ...  
You await the remake  
summoned by mockups ... of past odysseys ...  
trailers expelling intricate engines  
from the Renaissance ...  
I knew you would ...  
Embracing naïvete ... ignorance ...  
Hoyer ... then drop ...  
your ultrasounds ... off the charts ...  
Forget *Into Great Silence* ...  
Cage's 4'33" ...  
There is no perfect silence ...  
Act 1 Scene 1 ...  
You are (at) your own best ...  
nose pressed to the still-visible constellations  
double-blinding players  
whose hand-held buzzers emit intricate patterns  
of the mortal ...  
the body and soul ... one ...  
You recall their lines ... their movements ...  
their gestures ... the rehearsals ... the retakes ...  
It's all good! ...  
Feral cats skim the edge of trees ...  
There are others ... as well ... clamoring for something ...  
avatars ... frosted with Facebook  
ready willing able for leaps of faith ...  
their marginalization duly noted ...

260

*Look, you have to have a little faith in people.*

- Marie Perle Hemingway, *Manhattan*

Short chapters ... make them short! ...  
Like *The Da Vinci Code* ... or *Utopia*? ...  
Woody and Diane on a bench beneath the 59th Street Bridge ...  
They had to bring in the bench, you know ...  
I've had to bring in a bench ... many times ...



Because you wanted to be romantically involved?...  
Channeling Lord Byron?...  
Mad, bad, and dangerous to know...  
Spoiler!...  
Cut to *The Grand Budapest Hotel*...  
Piecing together a life...from scraps...  
Why are you so depressed?...  
Not just depressed...but *so* depressed?...  
Fair question...  
Because of my agoraphobia?...my phobophobia?...  
In your own words, please...  
OK, I've been at this for hours...  
for days...months...years...  
Everything eclipses everything...  
I shouldn't have begun...  
I should've left the notes in the nightstand...  
The nightstand has taken wing...  
Angels...are pissing and moaning...as well they should...  
Do something before it's over...  
OK, I'm rewriting the script...  
I'm going to ditch the multiple choice questions...  
Multiple-choice questions?...  
Yeah, can you imagine?...  
Multiple-choice questions?...  
Hundreds of them...  
Life deserves an essay question...  
An essay question...with extra time  
and additional blue books...

261

Doing time in the fun house  
the mirror reflecting your syllogistic somatotype  
believing the words of buskers  
the slow curve to home plate  
and the swings in the old neighborhood...  
Tell me when your password expires  
and I will enter the magic room  
where cats brew tea for associates  
and wigglers wiggle...

Whats with the latest installment in your biopic?...  
I love the costumes ...  
Magnanimous of you ... indeed ...  
but now he/she expects to be included in the loop ...  
like the puppy whose wet nose is pressed  
against the pet store window ...  
Guaranteed to wane? ... You bet! ...  
This posturing ... in public no less ...

262

But the lines are throwaways ... the perspective trumped ...  
compartmentalizing your demons ...  
Act 2 Scene 2 Line 33 ...  
*Wherefore art thou (insert name)? ...*  
I see ... the parched facade ... the blemishes ...  
But don't we all? ...  
Foreshortening may work ...  
Allow you to appraise past escapades ...  
Can you deal with the attention ... fresh off the omnibus  
on which you were held ... per your wishes? ...  
Because why? ...  
Ah, yes, because you were engaged in developmental studies  
with their Type II errors in abeyance  
and a loose cannon tethered to your toned calf ...  
Of course they're looking ...  
your backpack or attache  
brimming with paperwork ... bound for glory ...

263

Late nights on rickety scaffolds ... soliloquizing ...  
fractals costumed for clubbing  
and something looser ... less will in the world ...  
pumping regulars for chump change  
ignoring irregulars  
who engage mindfulness ... with a takeaway ...  
then sweat repercussions  
while noodling entropy ...

Alt-Shift and you're home free ...  
tapping out melodramas at four AM  
with Cinderella heels ...  
providing sanctuary to bread truck drivers  
who get more than your autograph ...  
then favorite you  
while peeping through shutters ...  
You map a different route for yesterdays  
but your GPS sends you off-course  
into doldrums ...  
Do you know enough now about the ins and outs  
the ups and downs  
the sidelong insinuations  
of window-shopping  
of playing hangman ... on bridges  
in the middle of snowstorms? ...  
The makeover cut to the chase, yes? ...  
with its run-through of opening scenes  
players ... teary-eyed ...  
reviewing crumpled pics ...  
You played your hand to the max  
rode out your long-legged addenda with insider trades  
and short-term hookups  
cascading schemes until further notice  
from incumbents who didn't know and didn't care  
as if rent-a-gargoyle was in cahoots  
with the weary ghosts  
shuffling through the crystal castles  
featured on the front page of that rag  
you picked up checking out of Motel 6 ...

264

*Someone should record this ...  
Absent condescensions ...  
You can do this ...  
Assume ownership of the character ...  
Meet yourself halfway ...  
OK, into the darkness ...  
Then? ...*

*"All the world's a stage," yes?...*  
*In Friendly's... with interlopers...*  
*Can we start over?...*  
*No idea...*  
*Stop... already... with the analyzing...*  
*Ditch the script...*  
*I'm cutting and pasting...*  
*I am in a restaurant...*  
*Tap the app, already... please...*  
*OK, OK... I'm reading the menu*  
*looking for a theme... a conceit...*  
*What?... Drop the formalities...*  
*Find the door into the character...*  
*But the character has disappeared...*  
*Wing it then...*  
*Sans this... sans that... sans this and that?...*  
*Squabbling with those in the know?*  
*in the front row?...*  
*Break through the Fourth Wall...*  
*Only you can prevent usurpations...*  
*This time without backup...*  
*Without the profile... which was sketchy at best...*  
*I am at my best...*  
*Without overworking?...*  
*Pace... Isn't that it?...*  
*Now look at what you've done...*  
*The audience has disappeared...*  
*But this is good, yes?...*  
*You are by yourself...*  
*No next line... no next scene...*  
*freeing yourself to \_\_\_ (fill in the blank)...*  
*No dropdown?...*  
*No dropdown...*

265

Quizzical stares lead to a room where empty nesters  
eager for the next assignment  
take the scenic route to work  
slip through metal detection... and into cubes

to engage their fantasies...before lunch...  
Something bodes well here  
gaining momentum with Ashberian clarity  
wrestling with the script  
high water marks notwithstanding...  
The new millennium continues to strut its stuff...  
Santa will find out who's naughty and nice, anyway...  
Some prefer not to carbo-load...  
Some prefer to pick them up and put them down  
in full view of a diorama of articulated porn stars  
sporting incidental galoshes  
speaking exponential volumes  
brimming with architectural references...  
Is this working?...  
Is it making a dent  
in the indeterminate afterthought?...  
It's time to cut to the chase...  
To stop picking lint...  
There is no story here...no landfill...  
no hooks...  
nor ax to grind...  
nothing beyond your metric...  
a drop in the unimaginable bucket of leftovers...  
 $X + Y + Z = \text{more...or less...}$

266

Big-haired backyard barbecuers  
dance feverishly  
in yellowing collages of pics...  
zigzag through the neighborhood  
trafficking in incidentals...  
fingers...keyboarding songs  
swollen in possibility...  
sheer happenstance  
and garage band coloratura...  
Recall the duct tape  
its iterations  
when what to my wondrous eyes should appear  
cascades of ganglia

interspersed with large drops of rain...  
This will take some explaining...  
Is this the winter... of our malcontent?...  
The song and dance continues...  
Dogs and ponies celebrate  
proof... of existence  
logging roads and junkyards  
vying for a place in the annals  
of small town etiquette  
and independent films...  
Of course, you can do it!...  
Well, there's always a first time  
(don't deny it)...  
but with ancient history snapping at our heels  
it feels new... as if Scene 1 resurfaced  
in REM sleep...  
How many years ago was that, again?...  
Furniture music  
the invasion of smart devices...  
takeaways thrown away...  
One could fashion an excuse (I suppose)  
architectural embellishments  
pock-marked with red anthills  
kicking back with a beer  
at the corner pub...  
the ongoing conversations  
finessing flirtations  
as if the countdown had begun  
and locals had taken to the high ground  
fearing floods  
triglycerides  
broken promises  
from others earmarked for their contributions  
to adult coloring books...

267

Circumlocution... if only...  
mired in reruns... the solace of the familiar...  
taking a break...

assembling rationales for the hiatus ...

you find plant life ...  
a crack in the glass ...  
from moment to moment  
and then the drying out ...

moving on ...  
folding yourself into an envelope  
with instructions for re-entry ...  
riffing through dog-eared pages

transfused ...  
as if in the narrows ... boats bottleneck  
then begin without waiting ...  
But waiting ... for what? ...

The blank page? ...  
The incomplete sentence? ...  
You too cast off  
then rethink

lines from your favorite books ...  
your favorite films ...  
By why now? ...  
Now when the others are about to arrive? ...

268

Cartesian luminaries ... of the most outlandish ...  
brought in ... at the last minute ...  
on ferryboats ... saturated with artsy stuff ...  
Where to put in? ...  
My dreams paralyzed  
demanding answers to questions  
orphaned in blue books ... long ago ...  
You are heartbreakingly, disarmingly funny ...  
illuminating the what ifs  
so dear to many  
especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays

when the bagels are at their mouth-watering best...  
Back and forth... and again...  
Imaginations rekindled...  
Smooth faces in fun house mirrors...  
with words... Frostian...  
catapulting a mind of winter  
into the present tense... with all the fixins'...  
Instead of communion... a solo foray  
within which words come alive  
and lead to salvation  
and/or to that place for pondering the afterlife...

269

You spend afternoons with homonyms...  
connecting dots of primordial images  
with the speed of a python...  
In the free-weight room at the gym... language evolves...  
The blinds withdraw...  
Amanuenses appear... for St. Valentine's Day...  
You continue to pump iron  
adjusting the sweats you took a shine to  
without a sense of dread...  
The costume - as Book of Days...  
as notations sanded smooth by prevailing winds -  
runs deep...  
Close encounters of some kind...  
You tap your smart phone to the beat  
of his/her enunciation...  
Three sets of 12 reps, yes?...  
You are reminded of  
those times... late at night when you...  
enraptured by your Kindle...  
keep adjusting its brightness for better or worse...

270

This standstill is senseless... but necessary...  
Let's recap the past few hours days months...  
You gave (head?) at the office...



but didn't inhale ... while arch-conservatives polliwogged  
their way to keynotes ...  
We need to listen to clusters of notes before we decide ...  
No one note alone is good or bad ...  
Hours spent squiggling on *The Freddie Frehofer Show* ...  
its juxtaposition of arms and legs  
spawning footnotes ...  
some pages long ... not unlike DFWs ...  
athletic ... at the very least ...  
Good that you sloughed off the accusation of redundancy ...  
There's an aesthetic consciousness  
in this gaggle of blunt assertions ...  
this mess ... if you will ...  
this close encounter of the pathological kind ...  
Fear not! ... the green light ... the applause ...  
the key to the hidden room behind the bookcase ...  
in the library ... will temper in time ...  
Yes, the butler did it ... with the candelabrum ...  
shuffling off his mortal coil ... to Buffalo  
with a windchill in the negative tweens ...  
But aren't most? ...  
John B. Watson for example knew exactly what he was doing ...  
before his stint as Mad Man ...  
bedding down his graduate assistant Rosalie  
while conditioning Little Albert B ...  
who was never counterconditioned ... to fear fur ...  
Never forget the basement of the Alamo, yes? ...  
You too have had hybrid encounters  
and a reluctance to reveal your userid  
to anyone but your hairdresser  
in your 50-minute hours on Skype  
bumping up against *The People's Court* ...  
litigating the littlest legalities  
(if one chooses to call them that) ...  
while taking inspiration from *she who must be obeyed* ...  
Evidently ... came up ... again ... and again ...

overtake many of those  
who seek solace in the balladeer's tongue ...  
conjuring the self ...  
while outside snow speaks makeshift lyrics ...  
We are released early for good behavior  
to rouse the ire of the nasty weather ...  
pocketing vials of Teflon for the folks back home ...  
The streets clown us ...  
There will be no escaping the night ... especially now  
with your diary veering into unconsciousness ...

272

You thought you could unravel the laughter  
aloft in strange machines  
piloted by novitiates grown weary of story-telling ...  
When the time comes, yes? ...  
The ink dissolving ...  
The audience exiting ...  
Remarkable in your post-Vanna White protocol  
smoothing archaeological ruin  
from the third century BCE ...  
Surprisingly easy to walk the straight and narrow, yes? ...  
How many have adjusted contrasting embellishments  
and resumed play ... as if it were nothing? ...  
Pawn to queen four ...  
Happenstance knocking at the door ...  
Time to re-enter the crinkled photos  
when box lunches rode roughshod over delegates ...

*Begin mute ...*

Make a left turn here  
while the voiceover is catching its breath ...  
Imagine circumvention ...  
Count the number of bagels in a baker's dozen  
to help you regain a firm footing ...  
and face the unknown with a patchwork quilt  
and matching ambiguities ...

*End mute...*

You will see what you believe  
absent the existential interview  
and/or debriefing...

As you wish...

the main character was heard to say  
before remembering forgetfulness  
as if one two three threw open a portal  
to a magic kingdom...

We are reminded of incidentals  
echo chambers

classrooms filled with images of recipes  
for navigating life's eddies...

The traffic ramps up  
inspiring us to confront the dilemma  
of remainders

as if jumping the gun meant more...

Your six-year-old can do this, yes?...

273

Sparring with place settings ... at low tide ...  
as if rationalizing utensils with a sense of know ...

accordion dreams back-pocketed ...

tomorrow's version ... on the tongues  
of news anchors mired in flotsam ...

Hum along ... if you like ...

with the dissonance of the Jersey shore ...

where tete-a-tetes gasp their last

on the Bayone Bridge

during rush hour no less

and Roxanne tweeted something

about lumbago and Leonardo DiCaprio's

most-tweeted Oscar moment of all time

surpassing even Ellen DeGeneres's selfie ...

Can you imagine? ...

And just think ... when the circus comes to town

you can suit-up for stand-up

on the high-wire ...

your four-inch heels ... excuse me, five-inch heels ...  
just what the doctor ordered ...  
Playing ICU ... at the light ...  
your coming (out) attraction ... Oscar Night ...  
on the red carpet  
awaiting your cue ... coat-racked against calm ...

214

*People like to think that I was frustrated ...*

- Rose Wylie

Hickory, dickory, Doc Martens ... evidently ...  
and then some ... a full tank of gas is not enough ...  
is never enough ...  
I celebrate my selfie, and sing my selfie ...  
as if by-gones were ...  
while the looney tunes in the loony bin  
soundtrack an unexpected darling of the art world  
glaring from beneath her pewter-gray bob  
seeded with happenstance ...  
nomenclature ... a loose cannon ... or canon ...  
wrinkling the thinking of those in the know ...  
Stop a moment ...  
and take issue with the troublesome minions ...  
especially now in the aftermath of an opening ...  
Disneyfying Dickinson ...  
Of course, you saw them ... we all did ...  
so please drop (stop?) that line of questioning  
before you're benched ... two minutes on the clock ...  
with Klee, taking a line for a walk ...  
The afternoon cometh ... stalked by flurries ...  
It's not yet time to count sheep  
with a Hey, diddle, diddle  
and free passes to the Auto Show ...  
And now you ... with your camera ...  
memorializing moments for eternity's collage  
awaiting the green light  
the steam train chuffing out of the station

your unexpurgated memoirs ... in tow ...  
through the woods ... to grandmother's house ...

275

*... doesn't every poem confess something?*

- David Kirby

You audition behind a screen for a seat in the pit...  
the fanfare ... Chanticleerian ...  
before stopping  
at the corner pub ... in shorty ...  
the opening gambit ... unpremeditated ...  
awakening video endgamers  
with a shuddering rise  
coming ... again ...  
as if in service to Nefertiti  
taking a village  
letting the incidentals fall onto the gameboard  
moyes ... you invented ...  
gripped as you were  
in the pre-sainthood days of martyrdom  
when every instant was up for grabs  
the auction block loaded with requests ...  
(You do remember them, yes? ...  
not necessarily the sticky specifics  
but the gist of the encounters ...  
some played by ear within earshot  
of the players assigned to the rack ...  
the real point of the action) ...  
while outside the mist parlayed the rusting hulks of  
seafarers ...

276

Driving on the wrong side of the looking glass ...  
Irrefutably Heathcliffian ...  
Again, the story ...  
Trying to get the story straight ...  
The story ... a smattering of misapprehensions ...

neologisms ... return trips ...  
lost in the aisles ... of a used bookstore ...  
jostling for immortality ...  
not unlike X-boxers who freely associating  
your solemnity with past escapades ...  
now stand on their heads  
in the queue at Mickey D's  
waiting for their grilled chicken sandwiches ...  
in their minds ... a healthier alternative ...  
Examine the crossbeams of your gingerbread house ...  
the crossbeams of your thoughts ... your regrets ...  
while I interpret the shadow  
of your half-smile  
matching it to the shape of your hands ...  
the shape of your lips ...  
exposing your offerings ...  
to the down-the-hatchers ... and down-and-outers ...  
who have fallen for your YouTube flirtations ...  
kicking back on off-days ... and on-days ...  
engaging Throwback Thursdays ...  
without remorse or endiyes ...  
your stubborn refusal (is there any other kind?)  
best approached head-on ...

277

With less than a lifetime to play 20 Questions  
you decide to re-enter the fray  
pining for a rainy afternoon  
the entropy of the moments swooping down  
with felt-tipped pens for talons ...  
You could have taken an easier way  
but hysterical blindness is driving the bus  
so that's that ...  
Incidentally ... *slowly* is off-putting ...  
especially in the middle of the naked truth  
when gaggles of tourists ... sweating vinyl seats ...  
barge in ... aiming iPhones ...  
and waving permission slips from elementary school  
principals bemoaning lost weekends ...

Right about now I want to thumb through a magazine ...  
(I can't believe I just typed 'tight' for 'right') ...  
But enough of this fantasia-sport ...  
I for one grew into adulthood with knees bent  
and suede elbow patches  
miming the director of that mini-doc  
I've forgotten the name of ...  
Ending with a preposition? ...  
You bet! ... My swipe at the inefficacy of rote ...  
Eyes on the prize, I suppose? ...  
Let's not think this all the way through, OK? ...  
I want to savor the fortunes of a few ... I mean it! ...  
I want to drop everything ... for something ...  
I want to stick *cuspidor* into a poem ...  
There, I did it! ...  
Distracted by your description of things coming to a head  
when, for whatever reason, the endgame arrived early  
and we were taken aback  
by the thought of leftovers ...  
junior varsity ball-handlers mentally dissecting your  
jeggings with the pump of tin men exiting a motivational  
seminar ...  
I began thinking about those lazy hazy crazy days  
of summer ... to say nothing of the vibes we got  
from insignificant backpeddlers  
who kept wandering in and out of the cottage  
letting the screen door slam  
which for better or worse in sickness and in health  
is now or soon will be on the tip of everyone's tongue ...

278

This syndrome of impossibilities ...  
It would behoove you ...  
Really? ... And I thought you cared ...  
About what? ... Far-flung admonitions? ...  
Family members, notwithstanding ...  
I am ready to resume ...  
Why hesitate? ...  
Oh, now I see that the ON button sticks ...

Submit a requisition ... posthaste ...  
The aftershock is always ... perplexing? ...  
You are aware that this offer will expire, yes? ...  
Fortunes ... made ... and lost  
despite your attempt at entrepreneurship  
at the last feature  
when the opening scene brought down the house ...  
Are you ready to face the music? ...  
I believe it's John Luther Adams's *Become Ocean* ...

279

Fear not the logorrhea of the unblocked ...  
The calamity of driving a golf ball  
into rush-hour traffic ...  
a scene from *You Are There* ...  
Sundays ... 6:30 ... with Walter Cronkite ...  
when parlors were doilies  
and the livin' was easy ...  
We run out of oxygen ... again ... and again ...  
in our search ...  
over ... and under ... under ... and over ...  
chasing the maddeningly elusive center ...  
You've been there  
and scribbled rejoinders worthy of Shakespeare  
flagging insurrectionists in your dreams  
ordering IKEA furniture online  
along with Jobs's launching of a perfect cube ...  
SRO to hear a machine say *Hello* ...  
And now ... the underlining ...  
anointing a string of words for the next patient  
fretting a toothache in a dentist's office  
walls adorned with images  
of kids and vacation spots  
and instructions for flossing ...  
Hooray for those with a day-pass ...  
You've scanned ... and uploaded ...  
your Kodak moments ...  
You will never forget them ... nor they you ...  
no matter how hard you try



as your insinuations morph into comedy  
and exit through the gift shop ...  
Miles's *Blue In Green* jostling for attention  
alongside your students  
omniscient... indifferent... whatever...  
shepherded into the bipolarity of adulthood...

280

### Chapter One ...

Why continue to revisit failed love poems? ...  
The answer my friend is blowin' through the skulls  
of hyenas...

### Chapter Two ...

You find yourself weaving in and out  
of rush-hour traffic ...  
You worry neutralization ...  
a recurring dream ... through eyes wide shut ...

### Chapter Three ...

The Paper Chase ... as always ...  
You'll have the honor of last billing  
and an imagined proof hammered into the record books ...  
The word tangential keeps butting in ...

### Chapter Four ...

Your managed theatricality? ...  
It's got the best of you ...  
And your autobiography?  
Whited-out ...  
Yet, language seems to matter ... to some ...  
And they know who they are ...

### Chapter Five ...

Irrespective of the flaws in translation...  
everyone deserves a life ... in words ...  
its irksome footnotes tumbling through darkness ...

Chapter Six ...

Just what is this thing you have for augmentation? ...

Chapter Seven ...

The musicality works ... it really does! ...  
despite the barbs of fishmongers ...  
and inane enjambments ...  
submitted for someone's approval ...  
Facebook friends ... perhaps? ...

Chapter Eight ...

Notwithstanding extras ...

Chapter Nine ...

The Kryptonite Diaries: A Leg Up ...

Chapter Ten ...

Why worry bric-a-brac ... bus schedules ...  
downtrodden flâneurs ... dispirited by manifestos  
from every Tom, Dick, and Harriet? ...

Chapter Eleven ...

Out with it! ... Please! ...

Chapter Twelve ...

Fascinated by the limelight ...  
as we all have been ... or are ...  
compromising our role as MC of the here and now ...  
wrinkle-proofed ...

tugging away at unfathomable junctures  
for the attention of animators  
who couldn't care if less is more ...

### Chapter Thirteen ...

How's that? ... You could have at least ...  
Something ... not exactly sure what ... but it will come ...  
it will come ...  
when honeysucklers join with chamber players  
on off-days  
and play the roof off the joint ...

281

This then is the episode we salt and pepper ...  
Like listening to Chet Baker  
sketch out *My Funny Valentine*  
through a mouthful of metal and plastic  
after drug dealers knocked out his front teeth ...  
It's the behind-the-scenes that grabs us ...  
How things are versus how they seem ...  
Quentin Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight* ...  
the opening scene like the other day  
hurling us back into whiteness  
O. B. Jackson driving six horses  
trying to get to Minnie's Haberdashery  
before a blizzard eats them alive ...  
a ball-peen hammer striking a lovely bunch of coconuts ...  
sucking us in ...  
as when in the penultimate moment we collapse  
in awe of the world ... in all its wonderful imprecision ...  
Always something, yes? ...  
But ... it's all good! ...  
like being ignited by Lucia Perillo's poem *Foley* ...  
where everybody has a story  
about intimacy's lowest common denominator  
and love's faulty disposition  
as if phone sex ... across the fourth wall ...  
reminding us that

the body tells a story / mostly about loss ...  
Do you know it? ...  
But I am at my best when ...  
Of course, of course, you are! ...  
Especially after the black screen ...  
again ... at the beginning of *The Hateful Eight*  
Ennio Morricone's notes coming from somewhere ...  
out there ...  
stopping us in our tracks ...  
and we forget ... where we are ...  
we forget ... everything we were meant to forget  
when we agreed to enter the ring  
only to find ourselves asking  
Why couldn't things be like this? ...  
that strange alchemy  
of black ... and white ...  
of what we expect ... and what we get ...  
of what we have ... and what we have not ...  
and ... of the world ... in all its wonderful imprecision ...  
in spite of ... or because of ...

282

*Everything, indeed, is at least double.*

- Marcel Proust, *The Captive*

You draw a line ... in a sandstorm ...  
recalling moments when everyone seemed a double  
when you wished everyone was a double  
when rehearsals were contagious  
and life was lived ... by connecting dots ...

I tried this ... it didn't work ... so I tried that ...  
No problema, dude! ...

I come here to hide  
to try to connect the end to the beginning ...  
naming names to avoid confusion  
intimating nothing ...

There is a loneliness here  
an underwhelming  
warped facades ... forsaken by cameras  
aimed to capture the day-to-day ...

The line shape-shifts ...  
into a world of understudies ... with benefits ...  
wheeling dealing free agents ...  
with unfair trade promises ... and closed source stories ...

Stories begin and end in oblivion ...  
Players run amok  
skipping paragraphs  
chapters  
crossing lines ... willy-nilly ...

You learn your lines ... inside and out ...  
enter the scene  
deliver them ... in a panel truck ...  
without embellishment  
without the unsolicited recap  
without the blithering omniscience ... of those in the know  
without recrimination ...

You manage this ... despite the swirling madness ...

283

I am my own deriyative ...  
my own non-sequitur ...  
A committee of one ... pocketing delusions ...  
sweating square pegs in round holes ...  
retrofitting my Facebook presence ...  
Far be it from me to emulate ...  
let me think ...  
to emulate a postulate taking final vows ...  
how's that? ...  
I vow to eat my spinach ... but that's about it ...  
That we all should have evidentiary moments ...  
moments when we are knocked off our high horse ...

moments when selfies  
bleed through... the paper  
and let go a Whitmanesque yawp!  
that shakes the condiment aisle  
condiments flying off shelves  
condiment-missiles targeting fast-foodies  
aisles where vicious circulars clutter  
the faux-cobblestone floor  
and florescent lights  
induce close encounters... of the text kind...  
with Language Nazis...  
out for a night on - or off - the town...  
harkening back to a time when...  
A time when? ... A time when  
harkening back was Punch and Judy orgasmic...

284

Your Elements of Style are not my Elements of Style  
are not her Elements of Style or his...

The dust never settles!...  
I came to this aha moment as if by steam train

as fool-proof as the watering can  
sitting out there on the deck...

which reminds me...  
it's time to turn the soil in the garden...

I await a transcript of the testimony...  
an oblique view of the events as they unfolded...

*"Do not color outside the line"*  
*warned Sister Aloysius Joseph, my first grade teacher...*

*I got whacked on the knuckles with her twelve-inch ruler  
when I colored outside the line...*

*I erased Humpty-Dumpty's name with such anxiety*

*I put a hole in the paper, and got whacked again...*

*The naughtiness of assignments sparkles the redundancy  
of the day-to-day...*

*The naughtiness of Chekhov's Olga  
atop Seattle's Great Wheel*

*rain-soaked... Facebooked... body parts color-coded...  
accoutered with L. L. Bean relaxed outerwear...*

*Why sweat the backdrop?...  
The Elements of Style await an out-and-back road race...*

*I think I'll wrap them up... in brown paper... before  
the deer return to the wood after their morning feed...*

285

*Happenstance happened... igniting a firestorm...  
the screen door ajar...  
letting in the flies... and what not...  
The door to the mind springing open  
to poetic freedom  
to artistic integrity  
washed down with a Red Bull  
hearing a cacophony of stories  
trying to sort through the morass  
of random acts of so-called kindness...  
Those on the clock suspicious... as expected...  
But he/she is not wrong...  
Oh, really?...  
And what will you do after the dust settles?...  
Ha, I read in your other poem  
that the dust never settles  
when it comes down to  
the eternal sunshine of the spotless mind...  
or the spotted mind... or the spot-on mind...  
I forget which...  
especially now... with all sales...*

final I should add...being extended...  
Arguably...an insufficient amount of airtime  
on getting the word out...to the shortlisted...

286

and with that the paradigm shifts:

*Why now...after all these years?...*

*No idea!...*

*Please continue...*

OK, as I was saying the court stenographer is off the charts  
so don't expect a transcript any day soon...

Just a thought...

We all have them...occasionally...

Distance yourself...

see if that makes a difference...

Perhaps the eroticism of stomping grapes?...

What?...

I kid you not...

You mean like Lucy and Ethel

on the round-screen Stromberg Carlson  
in my parents' doilies parlor...circa 1956?...

No, no, no!...I mean like Anne Carson  
in *The Beauty of the Husband*...

her fictional essay in 29 tangos...

about a woman paralyzed with desire  
for her reckless but beautiful husband...

After driving a friend to Montreal for eye surgery...

I went to McGill where Carson was teaching ancient Greek  
and picked up a copy in the bookstore...

Anyway, in *Husband*, Carson and her then husband Law  
are stomping grapes...

His name was Law?...

Yup, here's Carson...

*You cannot imagine the feeling*

*if you have never done it*

*like hard bulbs of wet red satin*



*exploding under your feet,  
between your toes and up your legs arms face  
splashing everywhere  
It goes right through your clothes you know he said  
as we slogged up and down  
in the vat.  
When you take them off  
you'll have juice all over.  
His eyes moved on to me then he said Let's check.  
Naked in the stone place it was true, sticky stains, skin,  
I lay on the hay  
and he licked.  
Licked it off.*

The eroticism of stomping grapes, yes? ...  
Carson ... now remarried to Robert Currie  
aka The Randomizer ...  
does this collaboration masterclass called *EgoCircus*  
a writing workshop in which there is no writing ...  
Imagine that! ...  
Exactly! ... Imagining performance pieces  
that will make writers better writers ...  
*Anne Carson: The Poet of Perversities* ...  
that's Laura Passin writing in *The Toast 2015* ...  
But ... I digress ...  
*Hookups 'R' Us* ...  
our raison d'être, if you will ...  
And I hope you will! ...  
Nothing wrong with that ...  
Rejoinders ... now there's a paradigm shift ...  
Rejoinders make for accomplished bedfellows ...  
Sweating through the final paragraphs  
I was convinced that the ventriloquist's dummy  
was about to deliver the 12 soliloquies  
from Shakespeare's lost plays ...  
Huh? ...  
Go ahead ... google it ...  
You even checked Strand's rare book section, yes? ...  
As if I would know one bowling alley from another ...

Yeah, right, like Wittgenstein's grammatical confusions:  
*If you have nothing to say, say nothing...*

287

*Period is too final...*

- Anon

Dylan's *One Too Many Mornings* greets you ...  
Ghosts carry on  
about the arbitrariness of hookups ...  
Feckless endangerment? ...  
You miss the subway stop of your childhood  
run through a run-through of the street scene  
with homegrown players  
table-reading not-so-modern versions  
of *Orpheus and Eurydice* ...  
A traveling geometry  
brings angles to the encrusted ...  
trawling shallows ... stocked with unnatural monuments  
to the ones that got away ...  
trawling shadows for 3D printings  
of Shakespeare's *First Folio* ...  
But did they? ...  
In this poem, you are milking one too many mornings  
as an homage to Dylan's tweaking ...  
You were enough ... and then you weren't ...  
But it's coming around again ... so ... sit tight ...  
in your hallowed domesticity ...  
I've seen the farther reaches ... exceed your grasp ...  
Study it ... parley it ... saute it ...  
Figure this: you were entropied ...  
and you were entropied without permission ...  
And *they* were pissed? ...  
Few could have imagined the fiasco ...  
Please submit profiles of those few ...  
But I'm sure it was there ... especially on moonliteyenings  
when caramelized onions trumped caramelized apples  
and minions engaged in repetitious acts of contrition ...  
the phoniness overwhelming ...

So...where does that leave us?...  
Please beg the next question  
with your bedroom eyes aglitter?...  
Of course, there was a semblance of whatever  
but he/she left the mancave (womancave?)  
without a paper trail...without a paper cut...  
We'd like to hear about it because...  
as with Fence Books we like to be stopped dead in our tracks  
by *challenging writing distinguished*  
*by idiosyncrasy and intelligence*  
*rather than by allegiance with camps, schools, or cliques...*  
Parlez-vous...the global language we all share?...  
The suddenness of disclosure...  
You have mapped the downstate venues of your travesties  
where back seats were retrofitted  
for come what may...and you came...  
and that's when you arrived...  
and that's when you were memorialized via Super-8...  
and someone's stubby Ticonderoga...  
You decided you wanted to do this...and you did...  
So there...charming bus stops in the Old Country  
irrespective of their downtrodden heels and flimsy facades  
await you with bated breath...  
Might there have been another way to go about this?...

288

a choral piece for seven voices

y1: We are gathered here today to...

y2: Yes?

y3: Disregard the mirror's embarrassed reflection...  
its sameness...neither stated nor implied...

not unlike trying to find a mismatch in the sock drawer.

y4: Huh?

y5: Quibbling over the blueness of blue  
and how over time most bow to convention.

y6: *Fractured Fairy Tales!*

y7: The fractured refuse to engage...for shame!

y1: A new cast awaits the green light.  
y2: Bravo!  
y3: We all occasionally buy into fools, yes?  
y4: Grumble.  
y5: C'mon, aren't we suppose to be sharing misnomers?  
y6: But I've been unfriended!  
y7: I continue to be distracted by the horizontality of positions.

y1: That happens ... see Wittgenstein.  
y2: Me too! To say nothing of the horizontality of arguments.  
y3: You must remember this ...  
y4: *Casablanca*?  
y5: I think I need to rethink.  
y6: Rethink what?  
y7: I'm locked out of my email and ...

y1: I can't get (it) up!  
y2: Like rain? The not-so-small hands of rain?  
y3: But what if I expect otherwise?  
y4: What if I misread the fine print?  
y5: I need to rethink where to begin.  
y6: Begin at the beginning, of course.  
y7: Now look at what you've made me do!

y1: Look at what I've made you do?  
y2: Hiding ... again ... behind your micro-softened words?  
y3: Will I feel crushed? Is it OK to feel crushed?  
y4: I'm the needle for the email thread.  
y5: Cue the violin choir.  
y6: Let the SUV careen off the edge of the screen.  
y7: Epitaph? ... What epitaph?

289

You seem to have these labyrinthine moments  
in which 1001 strangers hang on your every word ...  
well, maybe not every word ...  
and printers' devils brown-bag the New Narrative

with finger-lickin' goodness retrospectively, of course ...  
Like when you are regarded spot-on ...  
Suddenly, the clouds part ... leaving you where? ...  
Leaving you here ... in this difference of opinion  
this semi-detraction  
this double-wide  
this then and now ... of nail nippers  
reportedly able to cut through bone ...  
It's quite obvious that you've been fiddling again  
with the (place) settings ...  
Have you been taking your meds or are you out on a limb  
with the go-betweens straddling bipolarities? ...  
The oblivion of being both is contraceptive, yes? ...  
I have felt this from the false-start ...  
Then doing a walkabout with the architecture buffs  
though being able to regard each with a finer metric  
is a good thing ...  
something worth going to bat for ...  
like the ever-present sexuality of the so-called moment ...  
the labyrinthine moment ...  
when the next installment arrives in the inbox  
long after the deadline ...

290

*Pronouns are ... bossy and noisy.*

- Maggie Nelson

Plasticity spells adaptation ... and suddenly  
you know the next steps  
suddenly you are the next steps  
and the wherewithal  
and the noteworthy elements essential to the day ...  
to all days ...  
telling others they were at the concert ...  
telling others they are the concert ...  
There are no bigger fish to fry ...  
upstream or downstream ...  
Go out ... see for yourself ...  
Was Leonardo DiCaprio worrying proper footwear

at the end of *The Revenant*?...  
Weren't the embellishments so very very cool?...  
and how about the sound trays  
in their accoutrements...  
introduced in the final two minutes  
or was it the stranger...  
or strangers...  
behind Door #2  
awaiting the sound of your footsteps at three AM?...  
arms filled with accents...  
I'm tap dancing with language...  
tap dancing with words  
my feet are words...  
Clarity?... I don't want to give everything away...  
Who gives everything away?...  
There's always a sequel, yes?...  
If not, there should be a sequel...several!...  
I hope I'm not too far off base here...

291

*Life can only be understood backwards,...*  
- Soren Kierkegaard

So I threw it into reverse  
but still couldn't make out the Christmas carolers  
the decked halls  
the pristine lines...enjambéd...  
my grandparents' wedding day  
the tete-a-tetes  
the in-absentias  
though I did hear the jazzers...faintly...  
Then I got a new bicycle...a Rollfast...  
red with red streamers...  
*Hey, where'd ya get the two-wheeler?...*  
From the bicycle shop in the lagoon  
owned by a pod of sperm whalers  
who were able to make a go of it  
with the help of a small business grant...  
It pays to know...you know?...

They ran through the specs of my bike  
and filled me in on the whaling industry  
circa 1800s ...  
the ghostships that still roam the high seas  
searching for missing children ...  
Like the Rachel or Terry Riley's *In C*? ...  
You got that right! ...  
Can you come out and play? ...  
No, I've got to finish shucking corn  
and scoring gooseberries ...  
My life as a gooseberry ... the sequel ...  
It's Canada not Canadian ...  
A bushel and a peck ... and a rat-a-tat-tat ...  
Lying on a futon  
in front of *The Late Late ... Late Show ...*  
on a cool summer evening  
Colin Clive as Victor Frankenstein  
*It's alive!* ...  
the permutations ... the combinations ...  
the out-of-the-box footage ...  
knit one ... purl two ...  
the cereal box mazes ...  
with shadows awaiting the heat of the sun ...  
a window to ... Whereverland ...  
being clueless ... the ecstasy thereof ...  
Falling asleep ...  
entering the room of a dream backwards  
where she arrives ... on a Harley ...  
I am all of 75 ...

292

You open yourself to experimentation ...  
to the edge of the virtual (visual?) cliff ...  
Bemused subjects ... some with nose jobs ... follow suit ...  
costumed ... for understudy  
leading you back to the blank pages of your grammar school  
where nuns ... in full habit ... patrol the halls ...  
dispensing indulgences with warnings ...  
The doorbell rings ...

you answer it... and vanish...  
for seven or eight years...  
assuming various identities...  
selecting menu items from both columns...  
Admittedly, not much of a musical talent...  
Offshore, an Evinrude sputters...  
Newsprint crawling on all fours teases  
grammarians emeriti...  
the walls of your apartment besmirched  
by an unknown stand-up comic...  
You decide not to pick up where you left off  
burying yourself instead  
in a dogeared *Whole Earth Catalog*  
convinced that double-reeds are the way to go...  
a contrabassoonist satisfying your oral fixation...  
This person who shall remain nameless...

293

Testing the waters reignites 35-year-old narratives  
almost boarding a plane  
almost after three stiff weeks in bed  
Facebooked as *Hello Stranger...*  
the blind alley as harmonic space  
as prelude to performance as color-coded jackhammer...  
It's all about pushing molecules around, yes?...  
And in the middle: But I'm not interested...  
OK, but are you interested in a subset... or a subset...  
based on the prime numbers two, three, and five  
sidestepping headstones...  
the graveyard swollen with the bones of whales?...  
And now this?...  
How real the fantasy?...  
A master fornicator... Byronish...  
taking an Uber to the Land of Eros...  
eliciting a belly laugh  
from the party of the third part  
lying next to you at three AM...  
Room service?... What room service?...  
The idea... not so much to simulate synesthesia



as to explore possible interactions  
possible interconnections  
among sound, vision, space, and time ...  
Does harmonic space for example projected over time  
onto physical space stop time ...  
or does it simply add players  
to Throwback Thursdays? ...  
Entranced by a frugal eater ... pocket change ...  
I dunno ... trepidatious, I guess ... just sayin' ...

294

You step into an autofiction  
having taken a lateral to customer service  
the engagements just out of reach  
by the practitioners of deviant art  
chattering incessantly about their memoirs  
on and off clipper ships ...  
You have written up many ... in the wee hours  
detailing their feigned interpenetrations  
in the common room and bedrooms of your third chapter ...  
Several fade on their own FaceTiming others  
worrying unannounced site visitors  
who insist on rummaging through cupboards  
for late-night munchies ...  
But what's the backstory? ...  
There is no backstory ...  
The backstory doesn't matter ...  
There's just this bubble into which we are dropped  
and it goes from there ...  
A temporary job chalks up years  
and before you know it ... you know ...  
Please excuse me ...  
I must continue recording the dreams of insomniacs ...

295

*Our life is a dream.*

- Ludwig Wittgenstein

A dream about a mannequin  
who dreams about Pinocchio...  
The conjunction *quæ* has left the building...  
He doesn't work here...  
Pinocchio?...  
We continue to worry language...  
The way words work... sidetrack... strut... fade...  
play games... miss the turn... get hung out to dry...  
hang us out to dry...  
Wittgenstein wannabes designing door handles...  
Last night doing cardio at the gym...  
the word *conjointedness*...  
popped up in the free weight room...  
Six-packs and six-packs...  
You... lycrãd and sweaty...  
in the first sentence of a short-short story  
about Pinocchio...  
Intimidating yet intriguing...  
Later in the parking lot  
you obsess over the loss of muscle mass...  
the loss of self...  
the attribution...  
the appropriation...  
asking yourself if paling is inevitable...  
Klaus Kinski as Paganini?... as Nosferatu?...  
Perhaps...  
I too am stoked by the films of Bela Tarr...  
especially *The Turin Horse*...  
which picks up where Nietzsche left off...  
Klaus Kinski *quæ* Nietzsche *quæ* Wittgenstein?...

296

What happens after three or four days, months, years  
of directing traffic into the spread  
of a polygamous morass?...  
What happens when *then* becomes *now*  
and you begin gesturing charismatically...  
souls of past players with the gift of tongues  
step out of the rangefinder

and begin lining up at the back door? ...  
It's complicated, yes? ...  
I am prior the movement... then stillness ...  
the hoopla of crossing Brooklyn ferry and all ...  
the hum of sunrise ...  
of sunset ...  
*Just as any of you is one of a living crowd ...*  
dotting the eyes ... costumed with promise ...  
the parties of then ... and now ... thick with lines  
lip-syncing Mad Shelley's words  
as he faced a perfect storm ... in the Gulf of Spezia  
in the seaworthy *Don Juan* aka *Ariel* ...  
only to be cremated on a beach near Viareggio  
a small Keats in his pocket ...  
Tell me about the heart of the story ...  
or the story of the heart ...  
the attachments ... real and imagined ...  
which is which? ... little matter ...  
the accoutrements ...  
ashes reinterred in Rome  
with Mary and clan relocating  
to a cliff-top manor in Boscombe, Bournemouth ...  
Tell me about the time when days were open books  
and chapters were modular  
and your cheeks were full of sightseeing  
and your heart was a wild child that had only just begun ...

297

*Are words good enough?*

- Anon

You seek sanctuary in a grammatical cul-de-sac  
worrying pronouns  
and the proper syntax for love ...  
The wind knocks down a tree ...  
You begin chainsawing the drops  
carrying out a lean-to  
for the idea that  
*words are not good enough ...*

despite your thinking  
that *the inexpressible is contained*  
*inexpressibly*  
*in the expressed...*

A caricature of Wittgenstein  
designing door handles  
for his sister's cottage  
arrives in an email  
which you consider forwarding  
but then delete ...  
It's a way of talking yourself ... out ...  
into the sunshine ...  
into the color of particles  
as thick as snowflakes ...  
connecting the dots ... to the afternoon ...  
imagining a carousel of alchemists  
with you stretching for the silver ring ...

298

The double bassist on my to-do list  
speaks Jelly Roll ...  
*Excuse me, but what color is your window? ...*  
Off-duty plagiarists in deerstalkers  
litter the putting green of my REM sleep  
with run-on sentences  
with incomplete sentences  
with life sentences  
with blah blah blah sentences ...  
Why lose momentum with archived never-do-wells? ...  
Counting sheep as cheat sheet ...  
Moving your queen into a safe position on the board  
will buy you enough time to run to the corner deli  
for a provolone on sourdough and green tea ...  
Your full red lips ... work overtime  
on my ink  
pushing the envelope  
out of my dead letter cubby ...  
*Hey, I'm trying to fill my dance card here! ...*  
You've managed to retain

your enigmatic persuasion...  
on stage ... in a sundress ...  
sending the game into extra innings ...  
I don't know how ... but ...  
like you the boulevard continues to mimic  
those in the know of art nouveau ...  
Let's step outside for fascination's sake  
and rub shoulders  
with real-time dance marathoners ...

299

Does any of this ring a bell? ...  
Does it matter? ...  
Is it the illusion of re-entering a scene  
or paging through a program  
to fetch the name of the pleasure principle ...  
or principal? ...  
long-listed ...  
somehow personal ...  
smiling an insomniac's dream ...  
a moving violation of neckbites  
and other seductive mishaps ...  
Your unwritten poem is blabbing away  
over there in the corner  
saying yes to Noh  
checking into Door #2 ... with #37.5 ...  
You were ticketed for tailgating  
and pled not guilty  
to entering a club ... on stilts ...  
dispatching patrons clucking and hand-wringing ...  
The shortest route to then  
eyeshadows an archived player  
trying to make it into the finals ...  
It's all in there ...  
*In where? ...*  
In the script of video regrets  
from casual partners  
on rainy days and Mondays  
and from onlookers earmarked to cameo

in the penultimate edition  
of your back story  
catapulting across dust motes  
with therapeutic touchups and oral delivery  
demonstrating the divine  
in sex toys  
poems that rhyme  
retired librarians  
after-hour tongue-lashings ...

300

Is perspective a hedge against the mutually observed? ...  
The omniscient third parties  
with their notebooks and keys ... act out scripts  
bridging fact and self ...  
Improvisations of the odyssey, yes? ...  
In the red ... always in the red ...  
clutching write-ups ...  
hamstrung by the limitations therein ...  
Stocking shelves at three AM  
you pick through trash for archival posts  
mounting pieces by amenuenses  
for gallerists who begin their day  
with texts and double espressos ...  
The eyes in your bedroom mirror  
are the eyes in the photos that once populated its edge  
leaving sentences for lifers ... documenting  
the odyssey as it unfolded in real-time ...

301

*And so I fell in love with a color ...*

- Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

Your costume as rhetorical fiction ... as *illicit* ...  
as maddeningly blue ...  
where in earlier chapters, you fell in love  
with retraction  
taking back what you offered ... teasing ...

as you considered the fast lane in a trailer park  
with rules for engagement for understudies  
afflicted with *acyanoblepsia*...  
the inability to see blue ... You know this ...  
and have managed to derail your obsession ...  
Your next move ... as witness to the beginning ...  
the middle ... the pleasure principle ...  
first slow ... then ... faster ...  
with eyes and mouth half open ...  
in front of a mirror as penetration of privacy, yes? ...  
This morning at the breakfast table  
your blue eyes mapped your next strategem  
imagining blue skies ... and blue waters ...  
a blue room ... in a blue hotel ... as if like Stein  
you believe *every bit of blue is precocious*...

302

*If they can do it, I can do it*

- Anon

Its all about leveling the playing field, yes? ...  
sidebars ...  
late-night Ubers ...  
categorizing narratives by color ...  
insinuating yourself into the after-hours ...  
asking recording engineers ... session musicians ...  
character actors ...  
about the nuances ... and blueness  
of your voice ...  
Finding that most people's favorite painting  
is a blue landscape ...  
with Miles ... in an atelier ... noodling ...  
*Kind of Blue* ... a mantra ...  
while others step up to the plate ...  
order takeout ...  
a crapshoot ... nonetheless ...  
You were abandoned ... more than once ...  
testing your belief in what? ... Magic? ...  
But aren't we all at times duped

by an illusion of our own making ...  
tweaking the script to straddle happenstance  
in positions construed as ballet  
even on those days that seem to unfold as planned? ...

303

*No whiteness (lost) is so white as the memory / of whiteness.*  
- William Carlos Williams, *The Descent*

You try to retrieve a dissonant melody  
but the street lights  
bobbing in the turbulent wake  
fade to shadows ...  
afterimages displacing the memory of your odyssey  
and its players ...  
You enter the fray ... with delicacies  
and become a vessel for happenstance ...  
This of course is as it was ...  
Time sprouts ears ...  
The abundant pronouns of your close encounters  
upend the entanglements ...  
your free throws ... Made-for-TV-Moments ...  
fill several subfolders ...  
as the magician's hand plummets into a bell jar ...

304

The choreography of the day carries you into  
the second act  
where backstage lighting  
showcases the incidental props of dreams  
soundtracked by furniture music ...  
Why incidental? ...  
With time, the stuff of days folds into itself  
leaving you naked in a one-way mirror ...  
on a one-way street ...  
*The Street of Crocodiles ...*  
hidden behind a bookcase  
in a one-night stand's double-wide ...



Entrapment follows the magician's wand...  
awaiting orphans  
who continue to grapple with self-checkout  
machines in Walmart  
carts brimmed with hand-me-downs...  
The flavors pale...  
You skip the rest of the chapter  
grasping at straws  
as if the opening of the exhibit  
exchanged yows with non-presidential candidates  
in this Olympic Year...

305

*...some sorry-ass grave digger grown bone-tired  
of the trade.*

*- Maggie Nelson, Bluets*

A sense of brutal honesty... perhaps not often...  
or... not often enough...  
Why bother with the examined life  
on the examination table?...  
With accretion... nothing lost... including loss...  
The images fuzzy... Is retrospection by nature... fuzzy?...  
by nature... faulty?...  
As when you look back and get drenched in blue...  
A sweet sensation?...  
And you insisting you always drove the bus...  
*Doubtful*... she replied... mid-costume change...  
as if... in the middle of lovemaking  
someone walks in...  
*I know my lines so please stop with the prompts...*  
Rallying around... and what not...  
The loneliness of long distance silence...  
*Not a chance, my love, you have parlayed that conceit...*  
Trawling for eyes... mouths...  
Awaiting the shuttle back to *Neveragainland!*...  
Floated by some... *There must be a reason for this...*  
Sucker-punched... and then...

conceding that it *may help some...*  
those holed up in themselves living life off-camera...

306

You crack open a Bud Lite and make yet another  
act of contrition ... arm wrestling with Mallarme's  
*creature of ancient and evil plumage...*  
the memory studded with the illogic of machines ...  
the stage sprayed with artificial mist ...  
The day swells with a sudden summer shower ...  
You are dumped into a grammatical cul-de-sac ...  
Snappy tourists and tourist-wannabes  
dream of accompanying happenstance on a drive  
along a winding coastal road ...  
highlighting your online CV with images  
of past players pumping doldrums  
in the mirror of an empty free-weight room  
in one of the many cities you've never lived in ...  
You make a mental note to re-up your membership ...  
On second thought, you contact customer service  
and ask about their return policy ...

307

Foodshopping for answers to the 20<sup>0</sup> questions  
double-parked in your brain  
you exhume a meta-metaphor for use in this poem  
bridging then and now ... and then again ...  
Players from your odyssey costumed as extras  
reappear ... and begin texting ...  
ying for a seat on the Argo ...  
*But why here? ... Why now? ...*  
Back to the woodshed ...  
back to rehearsing the audible improbability  
of life's irrepressible ups and downs ...  
Irrepressible? ...  
*Alas, poor Yorick! ...*  
You too knew him? ...  
Shakespeare's 400<sup>th</sup>? ...

On the white beaches of P-town? ...  
Bicycles like puppy dogs lined up on the fences? ...  
*Yes, of course! ...*  
*the betting windows at Saratoga*  
*the ponies of August*  
*the ghosts at Yaddo ...*  
*and the times when your thoughts were blanketed*  
*by unknowns shadowing you ... and your other ...*

308

That it doesn't always work out ...  
this cup-and-saucer world of water-resistant fonts  
where Harry meets Maggie  
and your search for totemic images  
inflates to Jungian proportions with parking spaces  
brimmed with backstory metaphors  
and exotic asides - the nuts-and-bolts of Dunkin' Donuts ...  
the spiraling down with heel lifts calling the shots  
*eightball in your hip pocket ...*  
You await word from persons of interest  
displaced to the farther reaches ...  
The fits and starts of unknowns ...  
The morning after the day before ...  
You continue to imagine  
the beginning middle and end of most excuses ...  
the popcorn days of your apprenticeship  
tapdancing the good life  
with deposits from sticky bottles  
recycled from the Tour ...  
and the sparring over putting pen to paper  
with eyes on the exit  
transforming lockups into the lockdowns  
of summer's documentation ...  
the trash tweeted ... and posted ...

309

The matter-of-fact streets of your makeshift childhood  
crowd with regrets over the empty candy bins in *May's*

*News*, the corner store stuffed with cigars, cigarettes, comics, skin mags, soda, ice cream ... where daily you were dispatched for a double chocolate ... and the number ... Done and done again ... And why not, yes? ... It's all there ... in the pianistic improvisations of Frederick Nietzsche ... who ... like most of us ... dreamed of the paper city of Carpe Diem ... shouldering his way through a table-read of Bela Tarr's *The Turin Horse* ... a revitalization sequel to the twelve steps as leaked to NPR ... I was asked to remind you that the marquee for the *The Last Picture Show* awaits your edits ... And you're filming this for a surrogate? ...

310

But it doesn't *have* to mean ...

For example? ... Goethe ... *the German Shakespeare* ...

the poet of affinity ...

*a lively color but one devoid of gladness* ...

And so? ...

Your weeping ages you ...

I can see it in the smoke and mirrors

and in the black canvas of your next project ...

The prestidigitator's attempt to forestall the inevitable  
irrespective of the curfew

dictated by the peanut gallery ...

Why your favorite book? ...

Your favorite author? ...

Why now? ...

This morning's talk through the woods ...

past the kitties' burial site ...

how your favorite colors relate to your favorite films ...

Anything there? ...

You tell me ...

I mean ... but it doesn't *have* to mean, yes? ...

The fingerpainted reinterpretations of your odyssey ...

The players ... and their parts? ...

Your intrusive necessary whistling ...

I know as well as I can ...

Intrusions are just what the doctor ordered ... sometimes ...

A side order of fried green tomatoes

would do well about now...

311

There was no misnomer...in retrospect...  
No mistranslation...misinterpretation...  
Naughtiness rendered as daguerreotype...  
rendered kaleidoscopically...  
Tests of insignificance at the .05 level  
invade your sleep  
raise hell with the books on the shelf  
say nothing when the garden is readied for winter...  
The overcast morning gives way to a detour...  
gives way to a mind of winter...  
I marvel at your driving...  
And you with your vegetable mindset...  
a vegan's way of looking at a menu...  
*Destry Rides Again*...Excuse me?...  
Cyclists spinning around second base...grandstanding...  
practicing voice lessons...  
vocal folds encircle Gregorian Chants  
in the first inning of a triple header  
on the Williamsburg Bridge...  
Sonny Rollins...on the Williamsburg Bridge...  
circa 1962...  
Returning to Brooklyn...in the back seat...  
lipstick smudges...  
lipstick smudged...  
As if the body were a stop light...snagging the  
unsuspecting...  
As if rigor mortis were about to set in...and you...  
odyssey'd...hanging by the threat of a garter belt...  
by the threat of a garter snake...  
and it's summer...fall...winter...spring...  
and it's Howdy Doody Time...  
with Clarabell (all three)...and Buffalo Bob...  
and it's your wedding day...  
rewound to the first time...  
Stick women...in bustiers...naughtiness...  
under layer upon layer upon layer of tulle...

*Come right in!...only to count out thirty pieces  
of silver...*

*Just the other day I was reminded  
of Penfield's memory experiments...*

*We forget nothing, yes?...*

*Pontificating on Windows 10 Internet speed  
degradation...*

*But I'm worried about consuming huge system  
resources...*

*and deconstructed grocery lists...*

*Caution!... Wet Paint!...*

*the wrong color...*

*the wrong place...*

*the wrong time...*

*There was no wreckage... in retrospect...*

*but now look...*

312

*But I am done with apple-picking now.*

*- Robert Frost, After Apple-Picking*

*You order a side of slaw*

*from a waitress in a faded yellow uniform*

*and worry the humdrum of participating*

*in a mass transit Q&A*

*as if the bottom were about to fall out...*

*Books are remaindered in times like these...*

*A Netflix devotee with a fat queue*

*trots out an old something*

*you don't quite get...*

*You think leaks...*

*probably because Dr. Oz extolled their benefits yesterday*

*on several flat screen smart TVs...*

*Just how smart are they?... No idea...*

*When will they ever learn?... Dunno...*

*Raindrops keep falling on your head...*

*The morning meet-and-greet is a rain check...*

*The wet grass... and then?...*

*And then the concubine in you appears...*

against the world of hoary grass  
to announce that she too is done  
with apple-picking now ...  
Future prospects cast a baleful glance ...  
foreshadowed by ossification and entropy ...  
And so it goes ...  
the after-hours dramatization  
the playing hooky in the aftermath ...  
Stymied ... and overwhelmed ...  
with delight, I might add ...  
sinking your teeth into a covered dish  
as passersby scratch stubble  
and dream of becoming swingers of birches ...  
The standing room only room spins  
and fills with surrogate ventriloquist dummies  
riding bicycles built for two ...  
By then you are three, four, five ..  
maybe even six or seven ...

313

*The Fall Before the Winter...*

Act One, Scene One: The Agoraphobe ...

A tilt-a-whirl ride in October's unseasonal heat ...  
with you going on about the difficulty controlling  
the unleashed vulnerability ...  
Your weeping willows ... and pale matadors as such ...  
and your nostalgia ... surely counterintuitive ...  
but so what? ...  
Hot prospects jam the queue ...  
Icebreakers ... with pilsner (eye) glasses  
as if Wittgenstein's half-smile  
or Dylan's Nobel ...  
Hammering it out  
with Miles's *Someday My Prince Will Come* ...  
You decide to err on the side of happenstance ...  
lost in the strictures  
of adult coloring books ...

To seek refuge in a momentary lapse ...  
The incredible luminosity of such  
with your ducks all lined up, yes? ...  
X marks the spot  
where you began one of your maiden voyages ...  
To be continued ...  
But I thought the peryasiye Dadaesque spirit of invention  
was a matter of course ...  
wiggling out over a red herring ...  
Notwithstanding? ...  
The question of balance comes up to the stage ...  
*And I suppose you have others to spare? ...*  
There's a bagginess to it all ...  
a looseness ...  
nothing to steer the course ...  
You left in search of common ground  
which you know as well as I  
will quarrel with the provocative ensemble  
inserted as an addendum ...  
You have been selected for tricks ... and treats ...  
But aren't you already on someone's to-do list? ...  
Read the next paragraph to yourself, please ...

314

Endless arrays of costumes ... their subtlety ...  
The clock ... mimicking the art of the play ...  
the art of the players ... their parts ...  
chatting some up ...  
bells and whistles ... and all that ...  
Enlightenment on hold, of course! ... otherwise ...  
Otherwise, what? ...  
Otherwise, ... stop gaps ... transpositions ...  
lost in the labyrinthine aisles  
of supermarkets ... and superstores ...  
Throw *who* a bone? ...  
Oh, really? ...  
Do you think ...  
Start over ...



OK, how about this ... Is there no other way? ...  
You could have at least waited for the credits to roll  
yet knowing how way leads on to way? ...  
Time can move forward ... and backward, yes? ...  
Why then waste time ... in the waiting line? ...  
Subtraction as metaphor ... as deal breaker ...  
as long lost ...  
Stop sign innuendos ... fiberglass juxtapositions ...  
And you? ... shortlisted ... here ... in your bunker ...  
a notch or two ...  
up or down ...

315

You're driving the bus ... and texting ...  
flirting with alternatives  
in graphology and museology ...  
taking back roads for all they're worth ...  
breadcrumbing a false route for trolls  
back to The Holy Roman Empire ...  
Can you handle the asymmetry? ...  
the inconsistencies? ...  
Can you distance yourself from those  
quibbling over insignificance? ...  
No need to reload the camera, yes? ...  
You're on record for covers  
for begin-agains  
for setting up a kiosk in a trailer park  
outside of Atlantic City ...  
and you have been written up  
for quilting your odyssey ...  
complete with blue lights, dampeners, and  
(un)dressers ...  
Let's reshoot the conflict and resolution scene, OK? ...  
I know you would have expected a humidifier  
but that's for later ... in the series ...  
after the backers bail ...  
Why bother with circumlocution now  
when there are oodles of others ... chomping at the bit? ...

The *pattern* of liking should have tipped you off...  
 A long bout of solitude  
 wrestling on what Mallarme called *the bony wing*  
 only to arrive at the *Pop-Up Shop of Pure Reason...*  
*Irrelevant, your Honor...*  
 This is all in writing, yes?...  
 The declensions... the alterations...  
 Insidious, but then... demythologizing the odyssey...  
 ala Maggie Nelson in *Bluets*:  
*It worked well because he is a passive top*  
*and I am an active bottom...*  
 You have encumbered your SUV... and your script  
 with encrustations...  
 the elements of which remain just beyond your assignment...  
 yet you continue to entice players  
 with your absentmindedness  
 and hoop skirt... hoping for a shot at Reality TV...

*So, sad fact, but get used to it, because nothing else is going to happen.*

- Anne Carson

How well did you know him/her?...  
 I didn't know him/her...  
 Why then the need to act?...  
 the need to deliver lines as if on stage?...  
 I am on hold... otherwise...  
 The world erased, rebuilt, erased again...

Reminds me of Poe's *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar...*

How so?...

A mesmerist puts a man in a suspended hypnotic state  
 at the moment of death...

But aren't we all suspended in the here and now  
 awaiting deportation to the there and then?...

Houdini never got back to Bess, yes? ...  
But what about now? ...  
Now? ... I'm only a pawn in the game ...  
A stretch limo ... with credits ...  
The idea of closure as afterthought ...  
as incidental ... lost amid the fourth wall ...

I tried to follow the directions  
but kept getting derailed by the enjambments ...  
to say nothing of the pages and pages of footnotes ...  
I have no idea why I felt compelled to continue ...  
I guess it has something to do with where I've been ...  
A clue perhaps in the first few lines? ...

You float above an empty amphitheater ...  
slough-off chance encounters ...  
with reenactors ...  
You hope to make a series of short films  
inspired by Anne Carson's comment that  
*the best one can hope for as a human*

*is to have a relationship with that emptiness  
where God would be if God were available ...*  
You return to the original wording ...  
The line-breaks have yellowed ...  
Impossible to draw the curtains ...  
This much you allow ...

318

You've lost me ...  
Brutally honest and soft and vulnerable? ...  
Your aim ... again ... is off ...  
Gotta get outta Dodge ...  
Thomas Wolfe couldn't stop ... either ...  
But sir, the redrafting emanates from the core ...  
You're focusing on the core, yes? ...  
Is it *Taking Care* or *Talking Cure*? ...  
Little matter ... Put your hands together  
for the *midlife crisis* guy, Carl Jung ...

who, in describing himself, according to psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott, gives us a picture of childhood schizophrenia...

I'll give you a moment to collect your unconscious ...

Got meme? ...

The fat lady who's supposed to sing

has shed a few pounds ...

Now what? ...

We await integration of our split personalities ...

And Sherlock Holmes's *Blue Carbuncle* ...

Is the jury still out on the deerstalker? ...

Coulda... Woulda... Shoulda...

*Why do birds suddenly appear? ...*

*Anorexia Nervosa* was first described in 1684 involving the daughter of a Mr. Duke of London but wasn't given its own diagnosis until 1873 when Sir William Gull, Queen Victoria's personal physician, presented his observations of an emaciated condition in three young women... Miss A, Miss B, and an unnamed third...

And now for a recap... The problem here is one of inertia...

Not a problem... consider the flying buttresses...

and the general state of affairs...

He/she had a keen aversion to monogamy...

The facts in the case of the one who would leave in the middle of the night...

The bridge tolls alone, yes? ... For whom? ...

For the party of the first part, of course ... are you paying attention? ...

Slipping through... costumed for the game...

*Snogging with ice-men/-women until they cometh...*

*Seduction as effortless as breathing...*

*O, surprisingly, was illuminated by it, as though from within, and her bearing bespoke calm, while on her face could be detected the serenity and imperceptible smile that one surmises rather than actually sees in the eyes of hermits...*

The odyssey continues ...  
Shelley's cats sat there ... thinking up ways to get even ...  
Your odometer will be subpoenaed ...  
I kid you not ... it's *all* about the bike ...

319

Segue to bottled ephemera ... clothespinned to your  
window ... with your affinity for cats ... for dogs ...  
for cats and dogs ...  
*It's raining cats and dogs ...*  
the spin ... the spin doctors ... the spinning ...  
the opening ... as gingerly applied ...  
then applauded ...  
Can you believe the outcome? ...  
Of course, it goes without saying, ...  
he/she reeks of unfamiliarity ...  
with the lives of others ...  
let alone saints ...  
Perhaps a touch of fear ...  
or fear and loathing ...  
Exonerated? ... One would hope not ... but who knows ...  
given the present climate (change) ...  
with lives to spare ... especially now? ...  
You lack science ... and a backstage pass ...  
It would behoove us to redo ... the read-through ...  
or the walk-through ... whichever ...  
Cache as cache-can, yes? ... To know  
the many faces of you ... amid the crumpled sheets of  
copier paper ...

320

*Life is not personal.*  
- Gilles Deleuze

OK, there's a redundancy ... like a rabid dog biting itself ...  
This from a dream a while back, yes? ...  
An online virtuoso ... nerdy affable obsessive  
bopping along

leaves town without forwarding...without a word  
as if the top of the woodshed blew off...  
You enter the scene...soundtracked  
by an abandoned house...  
*if only... if only... if only...*  
But is it inconsequential?...  
Doesn't it make a difference?...  
Hasn't it *made* a difference?...  
Not ready for prime time... not ready for the fall...  
Why bother?...  
Why bother what?...  
Why bother attending to the aftermath  
when all are present and accounted for?...  
Why bother appropriating...without a voice?...  
Is that what you're asking?...  
Hold a mirror up to yourself... Tell me about the  
disjunctiveness... the fragmentation...  
You can set up shop as a go-between in the in-between...

321

*How many words in the average novel?...*

You have mythologized your odyssey  
pinned nametags on onlookers...

*How many words in the average reader?...*

questioning the reliability of first-person  
players who keep butting in...

*How many words in the average person?...*

You have remade yourself...

*How many words in the average confession?...*

The nightmarish quality of cameos  
spurs you to rethink your opening line...

*How many words in the average day?...*

People are just standing around...

*How many words in the average saint?...*

I can't stand it...

*How many words in the average lie?...*

How it looks in a two-way mirror...

*How many words in the average lay?...*

Hallmarkian?...

*How many words in the average sentence?...*

You refuse to be bottlenecked  
by those who insist they're in the know...

*How many words in the average rant?*

Never before or nevermore ...  
both ... and then ...

*How many words in the average soliloquy?...*

You admit to misinterpretation ...

*How many words in the average breakup?...*

Your watching is fitful ...

*How many words in the average excuse?...*

and your commitment is a joke ...

*How many words in the average life?...*

The shoplifted elements of your profile ...  
 Smudges on the answering machine ...  
 Developmental studies? ...  
 Would that you could, yes? ...  
*And why not? ... asks Door #3 ...*  
 Buckle up your overcoat  
 next time you swim out  
 beyond the breakers  
 where mermaids are reassigned  
 as Sirens  
 gifting tantric truths ...  
 The sinisterity ...  
*The what? ...*  
 You know, the *sinisterity* ...  
*Whatever ...*  
 The sinisterity of fairy tales  
 disrupts your REM sleep ...  
 I am famished ... for nothing ...  
 I welcome the accusation of pulchritude ...  
 Many dislike the sound of that word  
 and are surprised by its meaning ...  
 I am intrigued by your insistence  
 on wainscoting ...  
 There are many more steps than 12 ...  
 How so? ...  
*Hey diddle diddle*  
*The cat and the fiddle ...*  
 I await the laughing dogeared edition  
 and was sold a mock-up  
 that whispered in my bad ear  
 throughout the night ...  
*Lucky me*, I thought  
 but then resisted the urge to tweet ...  
 And so they said you saw ...  
 But are you yatted? ...  
 It takes some undoing to read  
*I Love Dick* by Chris Kraus ... soon to be HBO'd ...  
 Your shyness ... replaced by boredom ...



So what's wrong with that? ...  
With what? ...  
*The Sexual Life of Catherine M.? ...*  
which *Sajon* said ...  
*Holds you tighter than a pair of handcuffs ...*  
I was sentenced to be a fly on the wall ...  
I sat back ... cigarillo in hand ...  
or whatever they're called ...  
I examined the cracks and crazes  
in the enamel  
diagrammed the lines  
the air filled with scents ... and nonsense ...  
words ... cries ... shouts ... moans ...  
the unimaginable sounds of silence ...  
bodies electric becoming  
entangled ... engaged ... enraged ...  
engulfed ... encumbered ...  
Parts replaced yet the whole the same  
as with the compulsion to become the other ...  
*an unrecognizable dainty tornado*  
as in Eurydice's *F/32* ...  
Will the miniseries continue? ...  
Will you re-up? ...  
*Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of men? ...*  
Better as ...  
*Who knows what evil lurks in people's minds ...*  
*The Shadow knows! ...*  
I weaken ... fade from view ...  
enter the Straits of Invisibility ...  
insouciant ...  
notebooked ...

323

*The ramen restaurant ... offers personal flavor-  
concentration booths, where patrons ... can experience  
low-interaction dining.*

- Emma Allen, *Eating Ramen By Yourself Is An Antidote  
To Everything*

The isolationist in you polishes silver  
in a high-ceilinged cobwebbed room  
collecting and comparing handwriting samples  
from hedonists ... and patrons ...  
on the truth of the matter ...  
the Mad Hatter's riddles  
etch-a-sketching memories  
of your understudy, Miss Hayisham ...  
a bowl of ramen noodles  
a piece of wedding cake  
the clock's hands cradling the past ...  
You are stymied ... again ...  
despite the entries in your journal ...  
its blank pages evidence of your odyssey's decay ...  
The wedding album awaits edits ...  
Your conquests pile up in the alcove  
where a fruitbasket interviews applicants  
for the role of supplicant ...  
a minor role, yes, but relevant  
to the underpainting  
which you insist is essential ...  
You, like many, fear micromanagement ...  
The scene ... color-coded ... familiar ...

324

1. You wake to the urge to BOGO
2. at this most wonderful time of the year ...
3. despite fading tan lines
4. spotty cell service
5. and road-texters fessing up to the White Rabbit
6. in waiting lines that curl into makeshift parking lots ...
7. as semiotician-stalkers scramble for seats
8. outside your bedroom window ...
9. obsessing over the signs and symbols
10. of your designer ultrawear ...
11. The myth morphs ...
12. The players exchange roles as directed ...
13. Many are missed ...
14. A few quibble ...

15. Rewrites are rewritten...
16. An aura of retrofication ensues...
17. The scene... infinitely looped...
18. opens... and closes...
19. opens... and closes...

325

1. You seek the promiscuous feeling of being alive
2. conference-call your mirror
3. and dream alterations in structural modesty...
4. *In effigy*... someone reminds you...
5. Why tarry?...
6. It would behoove you to take it to the next level
7. despite the rumblings from behind Door #3...
8. The other day an open mic in the supermarket...
9. Lines run
10. on shoppers with full carts
11. and full bellies...
12. No one stepped up to the deli counter
13. to sample the sharp provolone... sliced or chunked...
14. How long the wait... in the green room?...

326

1. Indiscriminate eyenings leggy with enticement...
2. with eyes...
3. exchange costumes at the entrance...
4. You know the drill... however goofy...
5. Are you underestimating the instability?...
6. the excitement?...
7. Come again?...
8. Field studies, yes?...
9. as if opening a dream... to decades-old meanderings...
10. drifting... out-of-focus...
11. The sky... too... counterpointed...
12. with aria... faint...
13. The weird aftertaste... of an unknown
14. hitting you hard on the drive back over the bridge

15. to an all-night diner...
16. before tumbling...downplayed...into morning...

327

1. Grim figures with notebooks and head colds...
2. Isosceles triangles in training...
3. Perch on bathroom fixtures and drywall
4. in Home Depot
5. recording life's secular apocalypses
6. for price check...
7. You engage them in Q&As
8. about toilet tanks...sawhorses...
9. crescent wrenches...
10. the impending blizzard...
11. Clues to materials colors dimensions warranties...
12. as the Porcelain Doll in Orange Overalls...
13. Thumbing through
14. *The Whole Earth Catalog's Tools for Change...*
15. Captivating players...and their parts...
16. in the tool shed...
17. pro forma...
18. with your 16 mm take
19. on Maryell's *To His Coy Mistress*
20. seducing the dumbstruck
21. with multi-layered costumed panegyrics...

328

Now that you've circumvented that...  
I just thought...  
What with all the brouhaha...about whatever...  
Time to videotape the scene...  
Resplendent, yes?...  
But what about the gaps...in the dialogue?...  
The silence would be an action, yes?...  
*Into Great Silence...*  
Like smoking weed...  
The form-fitting costume...as requested...  
Parlaying the emptiness

as if it were the correct pronunciation  
which... as I'm sure you know... it is not...  
In cursive... if that's what you want...  
*Stop the car!...*  
*Pull in behind that minivan*  
*brimming with yapping animals...*  
This was written into the scene...  
No sure by whom...  
But he/she said to follow the dotted line  
in the dialogue...  
Go with it... improvise...  
We could try *The Red Hen*...  
Yes, lets try *The Red Hen*...  
In the dream, I was burglarized  
and he was dead...  
Kind of unusual... even for him/her...  
*Ya think?...*  
Anyway, they continued marking up the menu  
with changes to the dialogue...  
Pretty good, actually...  
But then Door #2 swung open...  
The revisions tumbled out of the back room...  
Certainly enough time to grab a motel room...  
Well of course you can...  
Why are you lying on the floor?...  
He/she meant no harm...  
What about the bandaids?...  
And your shoes are scuffed...  
All that walking... seemingly in circles...  
But now the laundry has been folded  
and put away...  
Time to proceed...  
I'll take that call... and raise you three...

329

*A photograph with no "punctum" to draw you in and disturb  
you.*

- Roland Barthes

You know as well as I that the costume  
trumps the standoffishness ...  
this mirror-image of the transformation ...  
a surprise ... to many ...  
a panoply of seductiveness, if you will ...  
seduction as entre ...  
as when Proust dips his madeleine in tea  
and is transported to metaphysical reverie ...  
Who is bluffing whom? ...  
Enigmatic ... without whom ... yes, go on ...  
I have bicycled six crooked highways ...  
To possess in its entirety  
as when asleep one possesses oneself ...  
*Is that Proust again? ...*  
No idea ...  
A play in three ... no four ... acts ...  
Reassembled for extra credit ...  
The creditors askance ... a well of silence ...  
You enter the scene ... somnambulistically ...  
Your cropped top ... directing traffic ...  
The extras? ...  
Conquest or discovery? ...  
Stretching out ... in control ...  
This will be reshaped ... as in *I will reshape the scene ...*  
Isn't it obvious that it has to be redone? ...  
Put your dinner with Andre on hold ...  
You'll be able to assume charge ...  
able to resume ...  
able to subsume ... if need be ...  
*She was so wasted, she knocked over the dip ...*  
*When questioned about it ... she lied ...*  
Already indifferent ...  
as change ...  
as redundant ...  
as necessary ...

330

Blundering into the hemisphere of adjuncts ...  
The holiday pinspotted with strike zone and age spots ...

Traps baited with unbound collections ...  
The armatures of engagement, yes? ...  
You kick it up a notch for the blue screeners ...  
a bevy of iconoclasts in a black Chevy SUV  
ferrying across the Kill Van Kull  
using your archives as GPS ... The kiosks ... in overtime  
running lines ... forgetting ... most ...

331

1. Action figures ... with debits and creditors
2. with parlez-vous français
3. with inconsistent bedtime stories
4. of nights in shining amour ...
5. have returned ...
6. The day twists and turns and shouts out ...
7. Checkout lines bottleneck last-minute shoppers ...
8. BOGO becomes BOGT ...
9. Your old Harley running on empty over toll roads
10. appears ... and agrees to ferry you back
11. to the old neighborhood
12. to the desperation
13. of your parents' backyard barbecues ...
14. with the gambits
15. karaoke machine
16. sleepovers
17. hangovers
18. (un)dress rehearsals ...
19. Your e|an vital is up up and away ...
20. and on-deck for The Twenty Question Challenge ...
21. The end run is in the starting blocks ...
22. The slo-mo is a no-show
23. heavy with odds for the long shot ...
24. Install the app for *It's a Wonderful Life* ...
25. Do it now ... before it's too late ...

332

With *camera obscuras* (sic) on the virtual beaches

of your odyssey ... the white sand studded with the vexing  
asymmetry of indulgences flattening your life to a  
morality tale ...

in which he/she becomes increasingly enamored of  
inked torsos ...

This of course will be addressed in the next chapter ...  
along with the history of illuminosity ...

Excuse me while I trot off to the deli  
for a provolone and tomato on sourdough ...  
Trudging through the snowstorm  
and all that, yes? ...

There's something to be said for the interiority  
of this short austere work  
of fiction ...

It grabs from the get-go ... with its refusal

to stick to the customary protocol of story-telling  
not unlike the days of pushing paint ...  
sans serif ...

Elsewhere sommeliers await the rematch ...

Interruptions ... make for interesting bedmates ...  
Why the reluctance to take ownership  
after all these revisions? ...  
Mayhaps the *iffyness* of it all? ...

333

*This way or no way.*

- David Bowie, *Lazarus*

Tell-tale hearts tell all on morning talk shows  
slotted with errant knights and distressed damseles ...  
wakeup calls ... ignored ...  
Mayens ... encrusted with sobriquets  
enter roundabouts at speeds  
unsafe for Bollywood trailers ...



and you ... without reprieve ...  
reminisce through the third chapter and beyond ...  
plotlines folded into money belts ...  
The absurd drama ... at one remove ... anthologized ...  
repeated ... repeated ... for the better? ...  
What does this tell you? ...  
about him ... about her ... about him and her? ...  
About Eleanor Rigby? ...  
*Where do they all come from? ...*  
Upstaging the Simon and Garfunkels of the millennium ...  
bookended ... whispering in our ears ...  
anguishing over troubled water ...  
storefronts retrofitted for the now ...  
the without ... and then some ...  
thinking back wistfully  
for however long it takes ... to count out the coins  
and assume the role of lead ...  
The deadline passed ...  
The language poets of Abyssinia ... silenced ...  
demand a recount  
while shooters ... at 20 paces ...  
with chips in their brains  
and chips on their shoulders ... randomize death ...  
Like Bowie's *Lazarus* ... *Everybody knows me now* ...

334

Of course you remember those days, yes? ...  
soundtracked by Jaco's unfettered unfretted bass ...  
Can you spell *Word of Mouth*? ...  
Looping back to a mind of winter's pink skies  
and the remnants of past players  
infiltrating your portal  
when  $1 + 1$  was an imaginary number  
that laddered its way to the top of your Wish List  
where Utopians sported recoilless Doc Martens  
in colors to tweet home about ...  
There was no need ... no worms drilling into your OS ...  
Your play station was your life ...  
You were warned ... acoustically ...

Dylan's gray-sleeved *The Times They Are A-Changin'*...  
as you made your way to the corner mini-mart  
for Ed's toast (taste?) of the town...  
circumnavigating the razor-fenced delusions  
that profited everyone... and no one...  
while vacuum tubes leaked  
the words of poets who had signed off  
on beta versions... bringing home the bacon  
that would one-way-ticket them to an MRI  
just when their buckshot ducks were all lined up  
and the ovens were ready for the next mitochondrion...  
Uber Drivers of the World deserve a break today...  
*A Room of One's Own*...  
*Do you have an AR000? ... Of course you do! ...*  
There's no telling... Yes, please go on...  
rejuvenated... and rejuvenated... and rejuvenated...  
*Come... You Master (bator) of War...*  
stepping in and out of a series of dreams...  
autopiloting plants from bulbs  
commonplace bargaining chips YouTubing  
your audition for a seat in the orchestra pit...  
the pendulum swinging... back and forth...  
to Vincent's head on the body of a fly  
in the flick's parting shot...  
You were dumbstruck by the *Creature from the Black Lagoon*  
and the mysteries of Julie Adam's white one-piece  
that filled the screen... and your head  
especially the scenes in the cage  
on some backlot no doubt  
which led to the bowels of the Paris Opera House  
where the Phantom keyboarded  
phantasmagoric seductions for Christine for over 27 years  
besting *Cats* as the longest-running Broadway show...  
Those were the days my friend... unfolding...  
one after another with suits papering the A Train  
which morphed into *The Polar Express*  
for most... if not all...  
Little matter though... little matter...

As if boarding a tram in an end zone of irregular verbs ...  
 You ... clothed in the outlandish ...  
 just to be oppositional? ...  
 How many were there? ... No idea ...

You mistake *indelible* for *inedible*  
 and jump into a brief novel of waiting  
 your Etch-A-Sketch sapping the body of eroticism  
 courts and rejects intertextual references ...

No black and white idiom here ...  
 the moments between objects and events invisible ...  
*You're invisible now*  
*you've got no secrets to conceal ...\**

Pocketing variations of enigma flexing with  
 the urgency of an unorthodox kind of desire ...  
 you begin negotiating angles ...  
 raging against outliers ...

The ultimatum as pre-emptor ... as mystery tramp ...  
 Genre-bending as gender ploy  
 skipping the discomfort ...  
 just when understudies arrive ...

This is how it played out ... in the dream ...  
 how it devolved ...  
 when all else seemed suburban  
 and you surfaced as if at an impasse ...

\*Bob Dylan, *Like A Rolling Stone*

Apparently you were comatose all those years ...  
 a marionette to nimble fingers ...  
 an automaton dispensing emoticons willy-nilly ...  
 off-shore laundering muddying the movements

color-coded from your days  
in the dorm hustling Monopoly ...  
The hidden room behind the grandfather clock  
maps your seductions with wide eye-shadowed eyes ...  
the undertaking inevitable  
as you surrender yourself to the lusts of strangers  
initializing tick sheets in the sun room  
while picking lint from shirtsleeves ...  
Surprised? ... And now, ladies and gentlemen ...  
the darkside ... the underside ... the blindside ...  
the other side of then ...  
the other side of now ...  
lip-syncing Regina Spector's *Hero*:  
*He never ever saw it coming at all ...*  
Wait! Can we stop with this outpouring of theater or theatre  
this close encounter of the un-kind  
this semiotic overload  
this de-con-struction  
this rewinding of the tape  
this ripping of musical addenda? ...  
You bought into the notion of restorative solitude  
a power higher than the unremitting void  
environmentally friendlier than dishwashing detergent ...  
You are doing your part ...  
Correction ... You have done your part ... And now? ...

337

*Most of the time I don't run and hide.*

- Bob Dylan

You seed the illusion  
comfortable with the aloofness you've affected  
your undeniable self awaiting word  
wind chimes buffering fragmented hours ...  
You page through  
taking notes  
the photos yellowed and brittle  
the footnotes tiresome  
pages missing or hidden ...

Why go there? ...  
Why not? ... It all fits ...  
Or so you'd like to think ...  
But there are elements of happiness  
of enchantment  
of times spent with eyes wide shut composing lines that ...  
That what? ...  
That were never delivered, I guess ...  
Aha! ...  
I could have followed the thread, you know ...  
And ended up where? ...  
Not sure ... But not here ...  
And then? ...  
Look, most of the time not unlike the rest of us  
I just try to soldier on ...

338

There seems to be a disparity ...  
the images fragmented ... the lighting off ...  
and now you're squinting ... at the camera ...  
trying to clarify the choreography of the odyssey ...  
He/she presented with a revised script  
and a smattering of masks ...  
You balk at the masks ... and sketch an alternative ...  
The dialogue begins ... off-cue ...  
and does its best to preempt the confusion  
which is fogging the lenses ...  
The scene is re-shot with filters ... a waste of time ...  
nothing seems to be working today ...  
Perhaps the reason is buried in the footnotes  
along with your memorandum of understanding ...  
How ill-equipped (unprepared?) ...  
especially now with an albatross as metaphor ...  
In this poem you are all artifice ... the language frayed ...  
the letters of introduction misfiled ...

339

The unbearable lightness of you sporting a bowler

(à la Lena Olin?) slipping through an incognito window...  
The notion that what goes around...  
goes around an infinite number of times...  
cameoed...cinemascopeed...  
as if Super-8s were the new now...  
You sidestep the warp...and buy time  
on the dotted line...  
the nearness suffocating (as always?)  
the decades-old memory of loyemaking  
on a bunkbed...deconstructed...  
with you pining for an inspection sticker...  
à Möbius strip ensuring *non-orientability*...  
maintaining the mystery for the before-after crowd...  
rainbowed and enigmatic...  
The naiyete of post-Internet security thugs  
librariated...in the 800 stacks...  
Purging the past with a keystroke, yes?...  
There's always a room of one's own for everyone on this tug  
chuffing its way through the islets of Langerhans...  
*All you need is faith*  
*To hear the diesels humming...*  
News that's fit to 3D print...

340

The plausible deniability...  
Wait, that's a bit too strong...  
The plausible desirability?...no, no...  
OK, waking to a snowstorm...  
Another iPhone day  
chomping at the catch-as-catch-can...  
Google it...  
This will in no way be altered or elevated to make it more  
conventionally literary...  
Little matter...  
I am at my best when I am at my best, yes?...  
You are at your best with obfuscation...  
Undiminished...he/she wanted to shout...  
*I am undiminished*  
by the inopportune...

by the sharp questions being hurled at me ...  
by the light of the silvery silence ...  
Walk with me ... take a number ...  
How many times ... how often ... when did you begin  
to feel like this? ...  
Excuse me? ...  
OK, you reek of hyperbolism ...  
Huh? ...  
You exaggerate ... embellish ... the idea  
that your experience ... oh, forget it ...  
But who among us does not? ...  
Among us? ...  
You know what I mean ...  
It's part of the bigger picture, I mean, poem, yes? ...  
Are you on the heels of ... or on the coattails of? ...  
Please stop doing that ...  
Doing what? ...  
Regressing to one of your tried-and-true motifs ...  
Like when walking along a roadbed ...  
Yes? ...  
You sense the locomotive and wish for corrections ...  
the corrections you weathered in fourth grade  
reading a graphic novel ... on a snow day ...

341

*You're a liar!*

- Tilda Swinton in *Young Adam*

But the expectation trumps the whimsicality, yes? ...  
Of what? ... sleeping with someone? ...  
*Ring around the rosey ... earwormed ...*  
and we're all falling down ... the Urban Dictionary  
reminding us of the Black Death  
and the monkish chime ... blurring genres ...  
as effortlessly as the banality of domesticity ...  
*But I can do this now, having done time as a footnote ...*  
Forget the intrusion ... there was none ...  
But what about posed pics? ...  
Aren't they filled with lies? ...

What are you talking about? ...  
Welcome to *The Age of Lies* ...  
You're kidding ...  
I'm not kidding ...  
*Casual lies à la Billy Joel?*  
No, not casual lies ...  
Again you capture the fancy, better, the *fantasy* of many ...  
following a hiatus ... of how many years? ...  
The voice in this line is unrecognizable ...  
Savoring the rush ...  
The rush, yes ... yes ... it's all about the rush ...  
Aware of the seamlessness of thought and action ...  
the invisibility ...  
And now? ...  
Zero-out the counters ... and proceed with the scene ...  
He/she will attempt a comeback ... at an open mic ...  
But what about Thomas Wolfe? ...  
Didn't he host an open mic? ...  
I don't think so ... he was too tall ...  
besides, I don't have time to phone home right now ...  
Then make time ...  
*Make time?* ... whoa, the designated optimist  
has elbowed his/her way into the room ...  
Deliver the lines as written, please ...  
Peddle to the masses ... no doubt ... wait ...  
I'm googling as fast as I can ... and now my eyes close  
as I enter the fifth of seven levels ...

342

Your last time out was played ... in mime ...  
good will hunting à la *if-he-can-she-can* ...

a disastrous hookup ... where less was more ...  
and more was even less ...

with you lost among ceiling tiles  
while outside Stevens's snowman orchestrated



*nothing that is not there and the nothing that is...*  
And you ask... Why "now" the drama?...

343

Caedmon, the illiterate cowherd, learned to sing in a dream..  
. The seductiveness of the transcendent impulse, yes? ... The  
words sometimes coming ... sometimes not ... sometimes the  
wrong words ... No watcher at the gate, they enter the arena  
and the ears of others ... their attempt to hurdle the ho-hum  
foredoomed to failure ... You steel yourself ... against what?  
. . . conformity? . . . obsolescence? . . . Free-wheeling  
afterthoughts stampede pageviews ... provide just enough  
fluidity to prime a cold winter's night ... the moon taking  
on all comers ... in all weight classes ... The concept of an  
afterlife ... so day-before-yesterday ... Are you still there? .  
.. or have you retreated into the deep woods of derivation? ...  
Day-trippers choke supermarkets' aisles ... fall victim to  
the trumpets dissonance ... without the bells and whistles ..  
. without the enthusiasm ... of post-coital anaerobics ... All  
for naught? ... If push comes to shove, applicants will be  
required to submit their soliloquies in triplicate with a  
Sharpie...

344

That the room is spinning ... spinning ... spinning ...  
Unhouse your face ... and begin ...  
Time bookends itself ...  
You have made-do ... and made-off  
with the likes of nobody ...  
Evidence bespeaks versatility ...  
I have been verily amused by your analytics  
and antics ...  
Intentionality 'R' Us, yes? ...  
Arrange the chimes farther down the row ...  
You have crossed yourself  
past the row houses  
seemingly at ease with the accoutrements  
being examined and codified

in the makeshift alcove ...  
Of course I remember the locomotive works  
qua casino ... where the slots  
found a home ... and await the starting gong ...  
Isn't it as if you were pre-empted? ...  
It wasn't written that way ...  
I don't know how it was written  
but I know it wasn't written that way ...  
A switch must have occurred ...  
and flipped ...  
Nonetheless, you will be less remarked upon  
astonishingly mild-mannered  
with a ripple-effect to unfurl your socks  
in full color  
in full view  
in full payment  
in retrospect ...  
His/her latest novel plays upon dot matrices ...  
It's a Fulbright ...  
Imagine the centrifuge  
and the particle accelerator  
gathering dust  
especially in that moment of anticipated reactions ...  
The Law of Anticipated Reactions ...  
Perchance to dream? ...  
And yet a smidgen, perhaps? ...  
While you're up, could you please flip  
the complications ... of that encounter ...  
when the reds, whites, and blues partied hard? ...  
Trust me, it wasn't allegorical ...  
There was no dispensation involved ...  
Further, happenstance was not called upon ...  
You would think the obvious  
but the outcome surprisingly took on  
a broader issue  
and made its way ... tail between its legs ...  
to the photomontage  
as if nothing had happened ...  
We were caught off-guard ...  
All of us ...

And it was a good thing to be in good company ...  
We got the story straight  
with the attendant ifs, ands, and buts ...  
Things can get muddy ... as you well know ...  
especially with the threat of climate change  
and Holly Golightly ...  
You do remember *Cat*, yes? ...  
The knitsch was knotted ...  
We were about ourselves with five minutes left in the  
quarter and leftovers left over ...  
Please review the conscious avenue of deceit ...  
It's always there ...  
I have your back ...  
Thank you ... and be well ...

345

*A fairer House than Prose.*

- Emily Dickinson

Instead the twitching vocabulary blinds us  
with its patina ... demanding entry ...  
You have experienced this yourself ...  
see Journal entry #365  
Without reassurance then ...  
How we manage to traverse March Madness  
on a snowy March day ...  
your bad ear tap dancing  
to Keats's impossible music ...  
flirting with segues  
past players working an audience ...  
Meditation as foreplay, yes? ...  
You haven't refreshed the pages, that's why ...  
There's a blueness to it ... hypnotic ...  
despite the trepidation of icosahedrons ...  
20 questions? ...  
And *why* the cormorants? ...  
Instead of rewinding ... try resetting ...  
It doesn't matter ... the directions are misleading ...  
off-putting ... thick with errors ...

Of course, he/she wants to re-up ...  
Relegated to inefficiency ...  
the oversight of an overnight of the 10<sup>th</sup> order ...  
Recheck the code ...  
You embody the Pleasure Principle ...  
skim Freud ... flag Jung ...  
You deny insensitivity, yes? ...  
arguing instead the pressure points of the body ...  
Little wonder the insinuations ...  
The algorithms wax geometric on your eyelids  
providing a welcome respite to food shopping ...  
I can only imagine ...  
Unclothed ... wrinkle-proof ...  
escaping into the figurative  
as if a swell carried you across the jetty  
on an overcast day ... brimmed with extras ...  
Regard the script, please ...  
You were well-versed given your days at the manhole  
with its triangulation of  
hand ... mouth ... womanhole ...  
Is that it? ...  
Shape-changing ... and leaving before the sun ...  
not unlike a vampire ...  
Reason #3 for why your mother told you ...  
If the sitcom rolls in, be noncommittal ...  
the *honesty* you'll become ...  
These elements will magically take flight  
as if from your scrapbook ... minus 18 minutes ...  
where someone reminded you to hedge your bets ...  
And, of course, the buoyancy ...  
You insist numbness, but that wasn't it, was it? ...  
as you sucked on your lower lip  
waiting for the Windows 10 Update ...  
You were lavish in your arrogance  
and partied-on until the bubbles were pried open ...  
your odyssey threatening to be something other  
than what it was? ... is? ...  
You continue to catch the wave of enjambment ...  
fresh from Neverland ... prancing ostentatiously ...  
and this is good ...

indented on the next line to show that the break  
is the result of space limitations  
not the actualization of the self ...  
which tries mightily to crash the servers  
of past players ... who insist the seduction of bass lines ...  
not baselines ...  
for no reason other than buy-backs ...  
a pumping segue to the requisite ...  
your meter has tagged as a dream sequence  
intuiting its possibility via ekphrastic verse ...  
laid out on a picnic table astride cobs of corn ...  
Of course, there will be afterthoughts ... as always ...  
a celebration of the "I" and the "you"  
straddled with nary a homestretch ...

346

Under a fermata ... as if the book's deckle edge ...  
With amplification your silence will inhabit  
the margins of this poem  
not unlike a ripening of sorts ...  
perhaps indifferent-seeming ... at first ...  
then a buttoning-up against the cold ...  
You have become unsuited for tangentials ...  
play-acting ... breathing in ... breathing out ...  
trying to convince yourself  
and the other (named after the main character)  
that this is the language of lost things ...  
that this too is the way it is ... as good as it gets? ...  
tagged ... arched ...  
to be studied ... continued ... forgotten ...  
He/she enters you ... becomes you ...  
The odyssey as virgule ...  
Your first tea ... miles away ... down the hill ...

347

You were kept up at night by Joan Mitchell's *Les Bleuets* ...  
A book ... now a pile of pages ... on the terrace

at the entrance to Monet's cottage ...  
ghost-knowledge ... a mark of erudition ...  
passing the plate ...  
like Beckett's *Film* starring Buster Keaton ...  
who remained confused ... throughout ...  
asking Beckett if he had eaten Welsh rarebit ...  
freely improvising the lines ... the melody dictates  
rhythm and shared admiration  
of facticity and the poetization of form ...  
What are you talking about? ...  
Not quite sure ... but little matter ...  
especially now ... toeing the high wire ... though costumed  
we are recognizable ... spooning a hard conceit ...

348

The thought of Klein's patented riff on ultramarine  
and the high romance of pursuits saturate your jealousy  
of time despite a high wind advisory ...  
Gym rats crowd onto a blue continuum with feigned defeat  
pained by the thought of your strange repetitions ...  
their ineptitude straining the windows  
with halftone images ...  
You were climactically rebuffed, yes? ...  
but who's to say why? ... Certainly not page-turners  
who know the morbidity of sand  
slipping in and out of costume and into the role of street  
only to be shunted off into a siding ...  
You, not unlike many, are mired  
in the phrase *bald-face lies* ...  
its etymology as elusive as imaginary numbers  
skipping beats to the turntable's scratching ...  
An obsession with interludes will soon spell relief ...

349

*New and a bit alarming ...*  
*- Beauty and the Beast*

The bloated script toggles your erotic other

as if at a meeting of sorts  
with a chameleon-like character  
who never was ... and never will be ...  
pushing a Something-of-the-Month Club app  
celebrating the opening of the New NY Bridge ...  
Scalpers run lines down blind alleys ...  
friends with benefits bottleneck stage doors ...  
The millenium's magic beans, yes? ...  
A portal to *The Time Before the Time That Was...*  
cryptic codes choke gallery proofs thick with odyssey ...  
costumes ... understudies ... extras ...  
liner notes nuanced with clues to your whereabouts  
last seen being whited-out by sheets of snow ...

350

Tripping on bad soft-core porn  
you are hurled into impenetrable writing  
full of postmodern whirligigs  
and hidden prompts ...  
a room lined with waxy lemonwood paneling  
deep in the bowels  
of an unheard of snow day ...  
I don't think I like where this is headed ...  
I'm dog-tired from shoveling  
and misunderstood besides ...  
OK, we'll back it off a bit  
and cut to the symbols  
of the unconscious: a heyday of Freudian slips  
with your tendency to pigeonhole  
taking a back seat in a rusted-out stretch limo  
pinned by first-timers ...  
The driver is hosting an open mic  
reading his/her latest installment  
from an uncooperative smartphone  
and we're on the cusp of ordering-out ...

351

A cautionary tale of the imagination propels a cold plunge

into night which ends with back alley anonymous embraces  
down a stairwell ... into the street...  
notebook jotting your cross-country gambit...  
The morning after faced head-on  
with words-of-the-day about false eyelashes  
and the misunderstandings ... of playing the part...  
Yet it did indeed feel good ... almost...  
filtering as a go-between  
hinged on recording the latest in Odyssey Tales  
in which faceless extras being fed fried chicken  
audition for the part of a modern day Caligula...  
bipolarism notwithstanding ... the meds suffice...  
charting clang associations  
and that darn thread through the labyrinth...  
I am circus ...  
I am three-ring circus ...  
I am four-five-...six-ring circus ...  
careful, of course, in the derangement...  
The requisite basic disorientation  
and the need to temporarily unshackle the mind  
from ordinary semantic logic...  
There is absolutely nothing fortuitous about this ...  
or that...

352

It's here somewhere ... it has to be ... I just know it...  
Wind chimes ... catching the blizzard's tail...  
and you ... journaling your odyssey...  
now in its nth year...  
worrying the lines that deepen with every footnote...  
nostalgic for the look you had  
at the beginning of the New Millennium ... aka Y2K...  
Do you regard past playaphiles with a smile?...  
Should you?...  
You're asking me?...  
You paid the price for their best behavior...  
You made the best call...  
We all make the best call ... in the moment, yes?...  
when roads diverge ...



and the photo-montage of smiling faces ...  
*Smiling Faces Sometimes ...*  
*Smiling Faces Sometimes ... pretend ...*  
The Temptations, yes? ... Psychedelic Soul ...  
The Wayback Machine ... back to the 70s ...  
If they can do it ... I can do it ...  
with Jack in the Beanstalk's goose laying golden  
eggs on your face ... after-hours clubbing  
seals ... awaiting their ship ...  
brimmed with henna intimacy ...  
and the dead silence of phony phone numbers ...  
Who knew? ... Certainly not you? ...  
Then the stumbling began ...  
the eyeliner underlined with stilettoes  
and role confusion ... Erik - son of Erik - Erikson's  
*Moratorium ... and the hiatus ...*  
I retreat ... into my children ...  
I am my children ...  
I become my children ...  
I become untouchable ...  
I accept my sentence ...  
my paragraph ... the entire book ...  
a cautionary, confessional tale of two people ... me ...

353

*I've been Kerouwhacked!*

- Anon

A fly in my eminent domain ...  
or a cockroach ... or a pole-sitter ... or dog-walker for that  
matter ...  
I suppose it would take a village, yes? ...  
Kiosks awash with how-tos ... and instructions  
for un-dancing ... tipping the valet  
who tripped on his way back to the Wayback Machine  
with lines from *Proof*:  
*Let X equal the quantity of all quantities of X.*  
*Let X equal the cold.*  
*It is cold in December.*

Gwyneth Paltrow trading eights with Hannibal Lector...  
Armpit hair be damned...  
it all boils down to goop, yes?...  
He/she got Kerouwhacked brainstorming...  
or barnstorming...  
or talking through the walk-through or walkabout or  
walkout...  
The steps of a proof are murky.  
The steps of a proof are snarky.  
The steps of a proof are nestled all snug in their beds.  
Let X equal their beds.  
And then someone took a shine to someone  
and that someone opened it up to someone else  
and now someone will have to take the hit...  
Always looking the other way  
as if a periscope popped up in the Middle Ages...  
your middle ages... when your juke joints  
began stiffening with a creaking  
that shook you awake at three AM  
speed dialing your doc  
who was on the third hole... teeing off...  
thinking about Lexi,  
his daughter's jodhpur'd friend from riding class  
but first, do no harm...  
You're not waiting for the phoniness to end, are you?...  
Please tell me you're not...  
Please tell me you've handed in the assignment  
and that you're OK with the seating chart  
and with Einstein's definition of insanity tweeted  
by iGens or Y2Kers or GenZs or whatever they're called...  
many of whom sport Muffy's Lean Cuisine gap-toothed grin  
after she was bad-touched by Dilbert,  
the animated crossing guard...  
super heavyweight Xboxer... regular contributor to  
Emojipedia... awaiting the release of his feel-good single,  
*I Just Wanted to be Friendened on Facebook...*  
And now what?... The neighborhood clown  
has just trotted out his/her yoga mat  
and is about to contort in full view of a selfie stick  
which have been shown to transmit STDs

when you ignore your mother's warning  
to never leave the house without wearing clean underwear...

354

The day... overcast and strangely industrial...  
armpit saddlebags with full-blown cholesterolphobia...  
tipping the go-between  
to encapsulate time and attendance...  
rehearsing the commonplace  
three standard deviations above the mean...  
Have I been duped into thinking there will be another?...  
All this posthumous posturing, pshaw...  
Back then, I suppose it mattered...  
But now with deadbeats in ascendance, forget it...  
An octopus-in-training inking nonsense syllables  
itching with false promises...  
Tweeted with time-outs...  
insinuating itself into the best of times  
when no one is looking...  
How so, you ask?...  
I am filled with the music of *DakhaBrakha*  
a Ukranian group I heard on an NPR Tiny Desk Concert...  
The preferred costume of flâneurs?...  
Flannel shirts of course flapping on clotheslines...  
Could be the beginning of a novella...  
where readers cut to the chase... and regret doing so...  
Reading between the lines...  
you backstroke beyond the breakers  
as if in a scene from *Beneath the 12-Mile Reef*...  
CinemaScoped and soundtracked with a little help  
from Terry Riley's *In G*...  
And now, ladies and gentlemen, the last line...  
the one-trick pony has vanished...  
with just enough time on the clock  
for some to call it a miracle...

355

Moments like these when you feel adrift:

you're here; you're not here ...  
your life ... a novella ... or flash fiction ...  
soundtracked by dissonance  
as if beguiled by harpies in the palms of pallbearers ...  
You wake with the urge to use the phrase *in the know* ...  
As misdirection, perhaps? ...  
Consolation? ...  
You enter the fray disabling the tried and true  
with the words of ooglers  
yying for redacting ... and blueness ... again ...  
Which would you rather be? ...

356

Plotting the next stage of your odyssey  
jump-starts ring-tailed fantasies from your days  
in the driver's seat when you squiggled  
for all you were worth ... minus shipping ...  
Rent-A-Mime remains an option, yes? ...  
Spit-shining Crocs on those days when your tinnitus  
chimes in may bring relief to those signed up  
for your tour into the heart of darkness  
which continues to beat more than  
one hundred thousand times a day  
in an ongoing quest for the eternal sunshine  
of the ambient mind ... where partying morphs  
into a stone-faced commitment  
on the deck of the Nellie and you toggle  
understudies ... trading tasty tidbits  
for the something-or-other of strangers in full view ...

357

Again, the denominator rears its hazy head ...  
A toxic flamboyance ... waying a pinwheel ...  
approaches the stage  
where lines will be drawn with mechanical pencils  
by mannequins in see-through outerwear ...  
The problem of translation, yes? ...  
Zeroing-out the counters ... that sort of thing ...

while just above the fill-line you spot the missing pieces ...  
the missing persons ... and play through the midpoint  
with nothing in mind but the failed endgame ...

358

You are ticketed for going all the way on a one-way street  
in Chapter 18 of *Finnegans Wake*  
channeling *Here Comes Everybody* ...  
a borderline personality ... happy only when pissed ...  
You hail an Uber and begin recording ...  
hurrying nothing into memory ...  
backstory pushing through the glass ceiling  
dumping you into a seance  
with Emily Dickinson ... voiceover'd by Terrence Davies ...  
Why do passersby do that? ...  
Do what? ...  
Inserts sleeved DVDs ... barcode windowed ...  
into envelopes for return? ...  
No idea ... closure, maybe? ...  
afraid to leave something undone? ...  
You spend too much time in an atelier  
taking the wheel from court-appointed best-selling  
ceramicist Edmund de Waal ...  
Even the Silk Road to clubs in Staten Island  
has traps, pitted as it is with indiscretions ...  
and jaberwocky ...  
But I do so like to grope ...  
Yes, ... and? ...  
And I cameoed in Chapter 3 of *Psychotherapy for Dummies* ...  
giving head to a phrenology prof ... I aced the course ...  
You need to take a few days off ...

359

Of course there are other matters ... but that's for later ...  
Right now I'm not sure ... where ...  
If anything you can continue with pinspotting ...  
A minor miracle has come to the fore

and with it several outlandishments ...  
There's always room for more  
someone said ... I'm sure ...  
Look ... you're the one for this ...  
The clandestine underpins will go undocumented  
and unnoticed ... for the most part ...  
It's someone else's bailiwick, anyway ...  
someone else's Pilates routine ...  
Just the other day, in fact, if I'm not mistaken ...  
Indeed, you've been snapping pics for decades  
as unparalleled moments monopolized  
your unique features ...

360

Auditioning for the part of valet on the street  
of unparked cars  
you spin tales of wild nights ... wild nights ...  
silencing intimations of parochialism ...  
taking back memories of back seats  
on bridges seen at dawn  
from windows in apartments of unknown comics  
whose eye contact is part of their shtick ...  
One-liners dressed to the nines  
on stages set exponentially ... in powers of ten  
by the enormously well-read  
clutch one-way tickets  
to what some call Palookaville ...  
just off the boardwalk in Atlantic City ...  
a city tied to your DNA with lemons  
ripe for squeezing beneath camo'd trench coats ...  
Are you still struggling with clarity? ...

361

*... not trying has become the whole point*  
- Maggie Nelson, *Bluets*

Trafficking in hidden agendas with day-glo paint misses  
the point ...

Restorative innocence quiets the spirit...  
and makes playing modal a la Bill Evans an eye-patch drama  
as if licking the clothing off the fresco'd figures  
on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel...  
awakening the bloom of lilacs...  
tweaking photos to edit the story  
you want Facebook friends to commit to memory...  
Hamming it up... 20, 30, 40 years ago...  
Your co-ham now gone, yes?...  
his smile... an afterthought...  
Why now the disambiguation  
of shouldering the burden as we stumble along with  
the happiness?... sadness?... indifference?...  
of posting the past?...  
I am just past pedaling...  
appropriating deep-throat lyrics for an avatar  
aging out of a forgotten storyboard...  
Not trying has become the whole plan...  
and nothing but, yes?...

362

Your Likert-type scale with its even number of anchors  
renders fence-sitting impossible... Not that anyone cares...  
. Auditions for Player-of-the-Month continue... The  
constant gardener... The reassignment of persons places  
things... You are reassigned... elsewhere... You apply for a  
sabbatical... to study ins-and-outs... redactions...  
Expungements like a good neighbor... The bus stations of  
your odyssey morph into empty rooms... Mannequins appear...  
. and color-code themselves... to fit in... Implied otherness  
... is not an oft-used phrase... Quickly, the storm of texts  
arrives... uninvited... Reading the odd numbered chapters...  
. evenly spaced... is one way to go... Questions from past  
players... hoping to score... choke your answering machine...  
. Your mother appears and orders a chunk of suet for  
goblumpki... Porcelain-skinned Angela, the store owner's  
wife, reaches across the counter... with a piece of fruit...  
The window showcases bound, hanging cheeses... their  
sharpness... the entrapment of memory... squeezing

through the fence ... dealing ... or not ... A Proustian  
moment as joie de vivre ...

363

Instead a foray into electronic music ...  
You make do with the acoustics ...  
The true through kicks it up a notch  
along the canal of your second chapter  
which is pretty much good to go ...  
A low thin cloud invades the recording studio ...  
Again, the emptiness  
with a dark function that takes on the late '80s  
as if you have isolated the indexes  
which hold the order of players  
as listed in the credits ... which keep rolling ...  
There's really nothing to do here ...  
Does this ring a bell? ...  
Recall the boardwalk ... and the hookups  
when everyone smoked or seemed to ...

364

You made sure the sidings were empty ...  
The inexplicable explained in the margins  
of chapbooks that have taken flight  
as a way to appropriate images  
from Facebook friends ...  
Squeezing through the mirror in the fun house  
is a fun thing to do on days when footnotes fail ...  
Do you feel as obligated as you once did? ...  
You telling me about your expertise  
or what you took to be your expertise ...  
You certainly had your share  
of forgotten moments ...  
when out of the blue you received applications  
for the position you had yet to advertise ...  
It's all in the business cards, I guess ...  
A good thing you insisted on photo IDs ...  
The incidental music proved a fascinating backstory ...



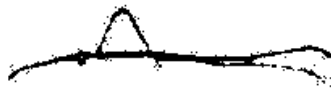
One that held the listener  
and prompted most to order seconds ...

365

*Do you think you're talking to a normal person here?*  
- David Letterman

You have become a gardener of time  
refusing to admit to theory  
to the notion of passage ...  
balancing world views on a pinhead  
while cataloging the entrails of happenstance ...  
Hopes, dreams, paradigms, yes? ...  
come together as a resolution of sorts ...  
of elements of style ... of chance ...  
the harmonics of each breath ...  
the sound deafening ... as you confront silence ...  
unable to contribute anything as spellbinding  
as emptiness ...





swimming in happenstance press

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